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G O D

By the Same Author

Essays and Criticism

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY : A CRITICAL STUDY
THE EVOLUTION OF AN INTELLECTUAL
ASPECTS OF LITERATURE
COUNTRIES OF THE MIND
PENCILLINGS
DISCOVERIES
THE PROBLEM OF STYLE
KEATS AND SHAKESPEARE
TO THE UNKNOWN GOD
THINGS TO COME
POEMS BY ANNE, COUNTESS OF WINCHILSEA
LIFE OF JESUS

Novels

STILL LIFE
THE THINGS WE ARE
THE VOYAGE

Poetry

THE CRITIC IN JUDGMENT
POEMS : 1916-1920
CINNAMON AND ANGELICA

GOD

Being an Introduction to the Science of Metabiology

By

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

'No organism corresponds completely to the Idea that lies at its root; behind every one the higher Idea is hidden. That is the God we all seek after and hope to find, but we can only feel him, we cannot see him.'

GOETHE

Conversations

JONATHAN CAPE
Thirty Bedford Square
London

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To

Violet Middleton Murry

PREFACE

This is a queer book; yet it is, at bottom, a very simple one. Hence, its simple title. It could easily have borne the more elaborate one, which serves as the sub-title : 'An Introduction to the Science of Metabiology.' It would not be false; but it might be forbidding. 'God' suits it better.

There is much talk to-day about the possibility of a reconciliation between Science and Religion. In this book they are reconciled, and by neither violence nor vagueness. The reconciliation is so thorough that perhaps neither of them will like it. In which case I should conclude that neither of them really wants it.

PART I

I

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

§ 1

It seems that I cannot avoid beginning this book with autobiography. Had I a more powerful mind, it might be possible for me to expound its theses in orderly abstraction ; and there have been many moments when I have fervently desired to do this. It is not comfortable to wear one's heart upon one's sleeve; and I am troubled by the thought that it would be a far more comely thing if I could develop my theses as a pure philosopher, in forms from which the taint of personality had been wholly removed.

But when I have attempted to do this, I have found myself beset with all manner of difficulties – difficulties, above all, of language. There is a constant reference, in my use of words, to experience of a kind which is, fortunately or unfortunately, not familiar. The consequence was that my endeavour to be impersonal and clear led only to an increasing obscurity, which was intolerable.

The attempt to keep my personal experience wholly in the background had therefore to be abandoned. Autobiography came creeping in, like Nature in the Latin tag: *Naturam expellas furca tamen usque recurret.* Drive her out by the door and she will be in at the keyhole. Rather than fall a

victim to this surreptitious personality, I have chosen after much misgiving, to begin with it open and unabashed. I have been sustained against my own self-criticism by two sayings of great men whom I admire. 'The manner in which one arrives at a matter,' said Lessing, 'is sometimes more important than the matter itself.' 'We read fine things,' said Keates, 'but we do not really understand them until we have gone the same steps as the author.' I am not under the illusion that there will be 'fine things' in this book. But I believe it does contain a few true things; and even of 'true things' the dictum of Keats holds good.

§ 2

The real origin of this book, the cause of its surmises, its perplexities, and ultimate convictions, was a singular experience which befell me more than six years ago, in the month of February, 1923.

In order to describe that experience – to explain it will be the work of other chapters – I must hark back to my circumstances of the months before it. They might be simply described: I had come to the end of my tether. I had reached a point of total dereliction and despair. I call it total; it was not quite total, as will appear, but relatively to any condition of mind that I had experienced before, it was 'irrecoverably dark, total eclipse.'

The war, in which I took no active part, had

annihilated whatever beliefs I had. What those beliefs were I find it hard to discover now. Probably they were neither deep nor important. The war came when I was twenty-four. I had had some little 'experience.' I had fallen in love, I had been very poor, I had been made penniless by the trick of an unscrupulous publisher, before I was twenty-three. My experience of life had, on the whole, been distinctly forbidding. I had no religion: whatever religion I had ever possessed – I was a baptized and confirmed member of the Church of England – had been purely perfunctory. It left me even more easily than it came. What notions concerning ultimate things I had, had come to me from Plato. In his Ideas I took no great interest, but I believed I could discern in *The Republic* an ideal of beautiful and reasonable living which attracted me and stood me in stead of a creed. I was a minor journalist, and I wanted to be a good writer, though what I meant by a good writer it would have been hard for me to explain.

I was a shy and self-centred young man. To my profound astonishment, when I left Oxford, my tutor had called me 'inhuman.' The accusation rankled, but I have since come to believe that he was right. But at that time I was convinced that I was very human, indeed too human, for my career at Oxford had been brought to a sudden and unorthodox end by my meeting and falling in love with Katherine Mansfield. I left Oxford abruptly, and

though I was human enough to return to take my schools in the hope of fulfilling my tutor's expectation that I should get a first, I had already become a stranger there. I was a struggling journalist, deeply in love, with no time for Plato or Aristotle. Since I could not explain to my tutor why I had left Oxford, my behaviour seemed to him capricious and foolish. He would probably have thought the same even if I had explained; and probably he would have been right. From that moment until the war, it was as much as I could do to earn a bare living.

The war was a thunderclap. I had not thought that a war was possible. I had written political articles, simply because I was told to; but the whole subject of politics was unreal to me. Not one of the hazy convictions I possessed was relevant to the situation. My friends were enlisting, so I enlisted; it seemed the only thing to do. I simply was borne along in the stream. After one day as a recruit in a drill-hall, I was rejected by the doctor. I think I was glad. It is true that I made one more attempt to enlist, fifteen months later; but then my definite motive was to be rejected again so that I might be permitted to leave the country for a while.

In the meantime my friends had begun to be killed. I was totally unprepared for their deaths. Men of my own age, who had shared my interests, and whom after my fashion I loved, were suddenly blotted out. A chasm yawned in my universe. Day

after day I brooded over this abyss, to no end. My instinctive fear of life became a hatred and a terror. The world was mad. Sometimes fantastic plans entered my head; once I was obsessed for days with the notion of climbing on to the plinth of one of the lions in Trafalgar Square and shooting myself as a protest against the horror. I was sane enough to realize that I should be counted only as another madman; and in my heart I was too much of a coward for such an act: but I despised myself for my failure.

I could not be a conscientious objector. It seemed, and still seems to me, that a man like myself who had never thought about war, and had formed no conviction concerning it, before the war actually burst upon him, had no right to a conscientious objection. He might object, as I did, but there could be no conscience about it. So, at last, when I was required to do something, if only for a living, I entered the War Office. I worked hard. I am naturally a hard worker; and I worked very hard there. It served as a drug, until I broke down. One of my colleagues, after glancing in at me, said to a friend of mine in the office, that I looked always as though I were waiting to be executed. The words stuck in my head. They revealed something of me to myself. I felt what I looked.

Women, I believe, have a far deeper instinctive faith in life than men. I had little enough to begin with; and the last shreds had been torn away. The

only thing I possessed was my love for Katherine Mansfield. I admired and adored her, but my depression, which I tried in vain to conquer, was a fearful burden to her. Not that she did not feel the war deeply, but she was able to safeguard herself against its preying upon her. The sick and grinding obsession it was to me, she could resist. I felt and I feel that to be obsessed, as I was obsessed, was wrong: but I knew no way to overcome it. I do not think that, being what I was, I could have conquered it; nor, at that time, did I realize how exhausting and unbearable a companion I must have been. It was my unshifting depression, I doubt not, which eventually caused Katherine Mansfield to live in rooms of her own a short distance away from mine; which she did from the spring to the winter of 1917.

That winter I fell ill, and had to leave London. I was generously cared for at Garsington in Oxfordshire. At the end of November Katherine Mansfield came to see me there. The night was very cold, and the drive from the station in an open trap was long. She caught a severe chill, which she made light of. When she returned to her rooms in London, she collapsed, and lay ill for about three weeks. It was at first reported to be pleurisy; from old acquaintance she had the habit of disregarding such little things. By the time I was able to visit her, the doctor suspected that something more serious was wrong. But she assured him that if she could only get into the

sunshine, all would be well. So at the beginning of January we got a passport for her, and she left England alone for a village in the south of France where we had known our greatest happiness together. I was infected by her confidence; I was certain that she would get well.

From beginning to end her journey was disastrous. In the last year of the war the conditions of travelling in France were fearful – carriages without heating and with broken windows – and even had they been ordinary, she ought not to have been travelling at all, much less travelling alone. She tells the story of that miserable journey in her letters. By the time that she arrived at Bandol, she was desperately ill; and her one desire was to be at home again. Her letters brought the fabric of my brief confidence crashing to the ground. I was in despair, the more intolerable because I was impotent. It was completely forbidden to me to leave the country to go to her. Three months passed before she could return. At length she reached Paris; and on the day she arrived the long-range bombardment of Paris began. All civilian traffic was interrupted. For three weeks, with the raging fever of phthisis upon her, she had to dash about from office to office trying in vain to get permission to leave, and then, when permission was at last granted, trying to get a place in a boat. When I met her at the station, she was barely recognizable. She looked as though she had been for months in some fearful prison.

§ 3

Whatever life may do to me, it can never inflict three such months upon me again. There is no worse torture than to be held apart from, and to be powerless to help, someone we love, in pain. Looking back, it seems to me that I was only half-sane during that time. I felt distinctly – and even now I find some excuse for my feeling – that we were doomed by destiny. I spent my evenings, or what remained of them, alone – I was no companion for anybody – and at length I became liable to, and the willing victim of, something which I have always called an 'intellectual ecstasy.' I read Spinoza at the time, and I identified it (perhaps too easily) with his '*amor intellectualis Dei.*' Shelley seems to have experienced it when he wrote of the hope that creates:

'From its own wreck the thing it contemplates.'

But nearer still than these, and more certainly akin to what I experienced, is the vision of Moneta in Keats's *The Fall of Hyperion.* No subsequent knowledge or self-criticism has ever shaken my conviction that in my 'intellectual ecstasy' of those days, I knew what Keats had experienced and wonderfully expressed by that strange vision.

'Then saw I a wan face
Not pined by human sickness, but bright blanched
By an immortal sickness which kills not;

It works a constant change, which happy death
Can put no end to; deathwards progressing
To no death was that visage; it had past
The lily and the snow; and beyond these
I must not think now, though I saw that face.
But for her eyes I should have fled away
They held me back with a benignant light,
Soft mitigated by divinest lids
Half-closed, and visionless entire they seemed
Of all external things; they saw me not
And in blank splendour beamed like the mild
moon
Who comforts those she sees not, who knows not
What eyes are upward cast.'

I may be wrong in thinking that these words of Keats have but one meaning; perhaps many different experiences of them are possible. But to me they have always meant a lucid ecstasy of self-immolation before the blind and beautiful power of Necessity, an almost exultant acceptance of the wreck of hope, a stab of pain and a thrill of pleasure in the single act of pressing home to one's soul the bitterness of human destiny.

The experience is perhaps impossible to describe; perhaps it can only be conveyed as Keats has conveyed it. It visited me more than once during the months of which I am speaking, and once with the vehemence and distinctness of a supernatural visitation. It came, as far as I remember, from an extraor-

dinary tension of the intellectual consciousness, an unrelaxing concentration perhaps for some hours upon the blind miseries of the world. My own torments were but my personal share of the world's burden; at most the universal suffering was concentrated to a momentary clarity in me. It seemed that I received a sudden illumination: these things were so, they could not be otherwise, and they were beautiful. More than this, I seemed to know that love of a certain kind, the kind in which I was involved, was by nature doomed to disaster.

All this was, doubtless, morbid; but it was my experience, and I had not chosen it. Much rather, it had chosen me. I can say to myself now, as the wiseheads will say, I ought not to have allowed it thus to engulf me. But these 'ought nots' are meaningless. I had resisted to the utmost of my power. That my power was less than the average was no fault of mine. And at least I had gained a fearful liberation. But the cost was terrible. In my heart of hearts I had finally lost all hope. The idea that Katherine Mansfield would get well seemed to me henceforward like a childish dream. I tried to act towards her as though I believed all might be well, and I tried to believe that all might be well; but at the bottom of my heart lay always the black, cold stone of unfaith. I think that for the most part I concealed it, though perhaps I was deceived. It is hard to conceal a thing so ultimate from a loving woman; and when I was caught unawares by the

sudden question: 'But you *do* believe we are going to be happy?' I felt a grinding and unspeakable pain, which was hard to hide. These daily concealments and suppressions worked disastrously upon me. Slowly a deep division was thrust down into my being between what I was and what I appeared. The lie, I felt, was in my soul.

The inevitable happened. I, who should have given her strength and confidence, had none to give. Perhaps I weakened her own. The war ended, but for me the war went on. For not only was Katherine Mansfield's illness as much a circumstance of the war as any death at the front; but it had become for me the personal symbol of that universal suffering. The real nature of things had been revealed, and here in her living struggle against death was a perpetual reminder of what it was.

For her sake, if not for my own, I had to find some fragment of a faith in life. And I could not. I did not know how to begin the search. I was utterly devoid of anything that could be called religion. The beauty of necessity, which haunted my mind, was not a faith in life, but acceptance of life's shipwreck – an ecstasy of death. I was 'good,' I was patient, the anguish of my love for her was unbearable; but that faith in life, for which she silently appealed to me, was clean beyond my power.

At about Christmas, 1921, when we had been living in Switzerland six months, an odd book was sent me at the instance of Mr. Orage of the *New*

Age. It was called *Cosmic Anatomy* and written by a Dr. Wallace. It was composed of a sort of gnostic speculations on the nature of things and of the human soul. To such speculations I have since learned to attach a meaning, as a sometimes useful method (if used warily) of making the borderlands of psychology amenable to thought; but at that time they meant nothing – less than nothing; they were positively repellent. I put the book aside. Katherine Mansfield picked it up.

She was then engaged in making arrangements for a new X-ray treatment by a Russian doctor in Paris. By the time the arrangements were completed, and the journey imminent, she had read the whole of *Cosmic Anatomy*. I was reluctant to talk about it; I was ignorant of and antagonistic to the matters it contained. Above all, I did not want Katherine Mansfield to be pinning her faith in what I called to myself 'mumbo-jumbo.' But the train of thought and half-expectation, I see now, had been fired in her. She went to Paris and underwent the X-ray treatment; but her mind was revolving other possibilities, not of physical but of mental regeneration. She returned to Switzerland, ostensibly for two months' rest before she continued a second course of the treatment; but I think she had already determined to follow up the clue that had been put into her hands. Since I was unsympathetic, she kept her own counsel; but when she returned to England for a brief visit in August, she immediately

got into touch with the group to which M. Ouspensky was lecturing in London.

By this time our minds were wholly separated, and we knew it. By education and probably by temperament also I was rigidly hostile to 'occultism': it was impossible for me even to imagine that it offered a way out of the spiritual desert in which I was lost. I took no part in the conversations with Mr. Orage, nor did I ever attend one of M. Ouspensky's lectures. As far as I remember Katherine Mansfield never asked me to do so. I was acutely conscious of my misery and helplessness; I had nothing to offer her, or to suggest for myself. All that I could propose was that we should live in a house in the country, and see whether the darkness would lift. The suggestion was forlorn and futile. Katherine Mansfield thought it better that we should separate for a time, and I acquiesced. It seemed a poor ending to all that we had endured and hoped together; but it was at least honest. To live as we were living was a daily death. There was nothing for it but to be born again.

§ 4

Shortly after, Katherine Mansfield returned to Paris, saying that she went to continue her X-ray treatment; but I had a clear foreboding that she would enter the Gurdjieff Institute, with which M. Ouspensky was in some way connected. I went to

live in Sussex. I had no plans, and no hopes. A little later Katherine Mansfield, when she was at the Institute, urged me to do as she had done, but I was unresponsive. I gladly admitted that it might be the right way for her; and, whether it was or not, she had at least *done* something, overcome hesitations (which were very great) and taken a risk. I did nothing. But, in reality, it would have been far easier for me to enter the Catholic Church than the Gurdjieff Institute. They belonged, in my mind, to the same order, and demanded the same attitude – the will to believe. The difference was that Catholicism gave you something in return.

By some chance or other I have always been quite incapable of the will to believe. I am unable to strike a single spark of it out of myself. I knew well enough that a faith of some kind was necessary to me, but I was powerless to take a single step towards one: unless the episode that follows can be so regarded.

I had been acquainted with a mystic, who now lived some dozen miles from the house where I was staying. His character had always attracted me. Judged by what he did and was he was a good man; and that in my experience is a rare thing. I went to see him frequently, more for the sake of his friendship than his doctrine, though I knew he would understand something of the intolerable position I had reached. Strangely, as it seemed to me, he found some considerable spiritual significance in a

number of poems I had written a few years before, at the time of the continuous 'intellectual ecstasy' of which I have spoken. These poems, in which so far as I know no one but he has ever found any valuable meaning, were very exact, though necessarily symbolical, expressions of the curious states of consciousness which I then experienced. That there is real and unusual experience in them, I am certain; but whether they communicate it is another question, which I am unable to answer. Anyhow their meaning was, and is, quite definite to me. Whether my friend understood this meaning, I cannot say; but he seemed to regard me as the possessor of some esoteric knowledge, to which I made no claim. I was altogether too weary, and too conscious of my own ignorance, to repudiate his conviction; I was ready to admit that he might know truths about myself which were concealed from me. But all that I ever clearly understood was the simple fact that he was kind and I was tired, unutterably tired.

Nevertheless, for some weeks before I went to see him I had been willing to believe in the possibility of mysticism. There, theoretically, was a way out, from which in my desperate case I ought not to turn away. The mere presence of the man and his wife gave me a comfort which I had not known for months. So I decided to live for a time in the house next door to them, and I began to do some simple exercises from a little book he lent me, such as sitting straight in my chair, with my body relaxed,

breathing deep and regularly, and trying (with extraordinary difficulty) to empty my mind of conscious thought. I very soon abandoned these exercises. Once more the old invincible reluctance made itself manifest: I felt that I would sooner stay in the darkness for ever than extricate myself by these appliances. But, for honesty's sake, I must record that during the last of these exercises, when I had been a little more successful than usual in emptying my mind of conscious thought, there shaped itself distinctly in white light against the background of my closed eyes the symbol ☥. My friend when I asked him told me that it was the Egyptian *Tau* and that it was the symbol of eternal life. But instead of being encouraged, I was depressed. I had seen a symbol of eternal life; but what then? No life, eternal or ephemeral, poured into me. My instinctive dislike of such practices became suddenly more vehement. If that was the only way of salvation for me, I preferred to be damned.

It is difficult for me to recollect my exact state of mind at this time. I was an intellectual, who had lost all faith in the intellect; I was living, and I had lost all desire to live. I felt the necessity of some kind of spiritual rebirth, and I thought it might be possible. But to achieve that possibility was evidently out of my stars. Like Katy at the end of Tchehov's *Dreary Story* I asked: 'What shall I do?', and I answered myself: 'I don't know.' No thought of a religion entered my head for a moment, though

I find in an essay written at this time more than one quotation from the words of Jesus; and in that same essay I find myself speaking of the religion of Jesus as of a desperate, heroic, and losing throw against the very nature of things. That attitude, so different from the one in which I was later to find myself, gives a hint to memory. I was evidently convinced of the necessity of taking some plunge into the unknown, – of 'losing my life to save it' – but here, as elsewhere, I had no notion how to take it. I must do something; and I knew of nothing to do.

§ 5

I had asked Katherine Mansfield if I might go to see her; for her letters told me a good deal about the Institute and nothing about herself. She had turned the request aside. Shortly after Christmas, 1922, I was surprised to receive a hurried letter from her asking me to stay there as a visitor for the week beginning January 9th. There was to be a great feast – a kind of formal inauguration of the Institute – and she wanted me to be there. Would I telegraph my reply? I replied immediately that I would be glad to come. There was just time for her to send me a letter telling me what clothes to bring, before I started off.

I arrived at the Institute between three and four in the afternoon of January 9th and I was shown straight up to her room. She was radiant, but very

pale. Before I had time to kiss her the thought passed through my head: Something has happened. By that 'something' I meant something decisive in the spiritual struggle in which she had been engaged. She had changed profoundly in the three months since I had seen her; she seemed unearthly, and I had never seen anyone more lovely than she appeared to me that day. She said she was much better, but that a month or so before she had been put into a small, cold room as part of the discipline of the place and had been on the point of collapse. But at the critical moment she had been given back the room where she now was – a beautiful room on the first floor, looking on the formal garden – and she was comfortable again. She told me of the theatre they had built, the exercises, the dancing, the gardening, the Russians with whom she had made friends, and whom she wanted me to meet. She told me also that she had at first tried to root her love for me out of her heart, 'because it was killing us both,' but that it had grown again, different from what it was before. She did not know whether she would stay much longer at the Institute; though she had gained from it. But she had not, she said, really made up her mind about M. Gurdjieff. Perhaps she would leave in a little while and come to live in a cottage in the English country.

I do not think we spoke of our struggles. She was anxious that I should see what there was to see at the Institute, and she seemed eager that I should approve

it. There was a great deal to be seen. I watched the gardening, inspected the cows, took a hand in painting the windows of the impressive theatre, which was shaped like a nomad tent of hair, talked to some of her Russian friends, and after supper in her room, descended with her to watch the rhythmical exercises. At ten o'clock, she said good-night to the company and we began to go slowly up the stairs together. About half-way up she began to cough. After a pause on the landing, during which her coughing did not abate, she struggled up the remaining stairs into her room. There she leant against the side of her big, wooden bed, and went on coughing. Suddenly there was a gush of blood from her mouth. 'I believe . . . I am going . . . to die,' she whispered. I left her and ran for the doctor. Two English doctors and a Russian came almost immediately. I stood there for a few seconds; but I was pushed out of the room. As I went, she gave me, or I imagined she gave me, an appealing glance. I sat outside the door, for a long while: it was only half an hour. By half past ten she was dead.

§ 6

One sultry summer afternoon, when I was a schoolboy of about fourteen, I was bowling to another boy at the cricket net. No one was very near us, though there was some desultory practice going on about a hundred yards away. Suddenly,

the sky seemed to fall on top of my head, and I was felled to the ground. I picked myself up, and ran for my life to a shed; I scrambled into it, just as a few heavy drops of warm rain began to fall. Then someone noticed that the boy to whom I had been bowling was still lying on the ground. When we shouted to him, he made no answer. We ran out to him. His legs were crisp to the touch; there was a bead of lead on the joint of his spectacles. He had been struck by lightning, and was dead.

As was the shock of that lightning flash to the physical part of me, so was the shock of Katherine Mansfield's death to the spiritual. This is hard to explain. There was a sense in which I had no hope of her recovery, I expected she would die: yet in that part of me to which the shock came, I had never *believed* that she would die. When I thought, as I sometimes did, of life without her, it was only thinking; it was not real. Now it was real, and I was numbed. I think I did most of the things that had to be done efficiently; I talked sensibly. I felt nothing that I could recognize as grief; but only a strange sensation as though my spiritual being had physical nerves, and these nerves had been paralysed by a blow.

As this partly passed away, on my return to England, I became aware of myself as an automaton, completely unable to make contact with my fellow human beings. When people commiserated with me their words were almost like meaningless sounds.

The automaton registered them, and made the appropriate response. But these appropriate responses were produced by a curious act of will. I made the machine work. To behave in this fashion seemed to me somehow despicable and atrocious; yet a kind of pride held me back from attempting to explain. I remember distinctly that I allowed myself to work up an entirely artificial indignation against a friend who genuinely loved me for an action which I dimly knew was right, but which I could represent as conventionally outrageous. It was not malice, or evil in me; it was that I was now utterly and hopelessly divided, and whatever there had been to supply the place and function of an ego had slipped like water down the fissure which had opened between my automatic existence, and that which recognized my automatic existence as my own. Strictly speaking, though this curious condition is hard to recall, I should say that I felt absolutely nothing as a moral being. I was aware of animal impulse in the automaton; and I was able to simulate a moral emotion, by commanding the automaton to perform its appropriate gestures in speech. But to feel, in the sense that to love, or to pity, or to hate, is to feel, was wholly beyond my power.

Some centre of co-ordination and true emotion must still have been active; for I did feel, violently and almost to nausea, that the condition I was in was degrading for a human being, and that I ought not remain in the society of my friends. Contact with

them was impossible, not because of them, but because of me; and the awareness of my responsibility was intolerable. I must go away, I said to myself, and be alone – really alone.

§ 7

'Really alone.' I meant something by it, something more than could be achieved by the mere act of going off to a remote cottage in a Sussex forest and living by myself; which I did. I meant something more than that, because I had often lived alone in the past, and been content. But on this journey, from the beginning, I found myself vaguely terrified of what might happen to me; and the terror grew, the nearer I approached my destination. I felt that I was required to do or to endure something now, from which I could no longer escape. The plunge into the unknown which had haunted my mind for months was now before me, and I must take it. It was as though I were being compelled to explore a dark cave alone, and I was afraid. But now all possibility of retreat was cut off.

I had not even the faintest notion of what I should, or could, do: and now the memory of what I actually did is faint to me. I am positive of two things: I had no plans, and I had no hesitations. Here is an account of what happened, written in June, 1923, that is to say within three or four months of the actual experience. Though it is tinged with

an emotionalism which is now faintly distasteful to me, it is certainly more accurate than any independent account I could write now.

'Then in the dark, in the dead, still house, I sat at the table facing the fire. I sat there motionless, it seemed, for hours, while I tried to face the truth that I was alone. As I had wanted to turn back, so now I longed to turn away. There was in me something that simply would not look, and, again and again, as it turned its eyes away, I took its head in my two hands and held its face towards what I had to see. Slowly and with an effort I made myself conscious that I was physically alone. Prompted by some instinct I tried to force this consciousness into every part of my body. Slowly I succeeded. At last I had the sensation that I *was* in my hands and feet, that where they ended I also ended, as at a frontier of my being, and beyond that frontier stretched out vast immensities, of space, of the universe, of the illimitable something that was other than I. Where I ended, it began – other, strange, terrible, menacing. It did not know me, would never acknowledge me, denied me utterly. Yet out upon this from the fragile rampart of my own body, I found the courage to peer, to glance, at last to gaze steadily. And I became aware of myself as a little island against whose slender shores a cold, dark, boundless ocean lapped devouring.

Somehow in that moment I knew that I had reached a pinnacle of personal being. I was I, as I had never been before – and never should be again.

'It was strange that I should have known that; but then I did know it, and it was not strange.

'What happened then? If I could tell that, I should tell a secret indeed. But a moment came when the darkness of that ocean changed to light, the cold to warmth; when it swept in one great wave over the shores and frontiers of myself, when it bathed me and I was renewed; when the room was filled with a presence, and I knew I was not alone – that I never could be alone any more, that the universe beyond held no menace, for I was part of it, that in some way for which I had sought in vain so many years, I *belonged*, and because I belonged I was no longer I, but something different, which could never be afraid in the old ways or cowardly with the old cowardice.'

However this may sound, and I find myself unable to judge it, it is, I am sure, a pretty faithful record of an experience that was actual and decisive for me. It impelled me into a course of action which in a sense I still follow; it set my mind upon a chain of thinking which I have never relinquished; it restored me to life of the kind I value; and, indeed, it has occupied me ever since. Most of what I have thought or written since that night and this book itself

have had their origin in the attempt to separate the truth and value of that experience from whatever elements of illusion, or potential illusion, it might contain.

What chiefly strikes me now, in re-reading the account which I know to be essentially veracious, is the strangeness of the procedure which I followed. At that moment it was natural and inevitable that I should have tried 'to force the consciousness that I was physically alone into every part of my body.' Yet now, six years after, I have only a vague notion of what it means, and I should be (I am sure) quite incapable of doing it. Yet again, I am perfectly certain that I had never read or been told of any such procedure. It came natural to me in my extremity.

I went to bed that night with some slight fear that this experience of mine might be a dream out of which I should wake. I slept a dreamless sleep and woke in the morning with a strange exhilaration. I was not only convinced of the reality of my experience, but everything that I saw appeared to be radiant, not in the sense that it was suffused with an alien light, but as though every object that met my eye were distinct with a rich and glorious distinctness which objects had never possessed for me before. This quality of vision remained with me for about a week, during which it gradually faded.

One point which I clearly remember, was passed over deliberately in my account of the experience. Where I say that 'the room was filled with a pres-

ence,' the 'presence' was definitely connected with the person of Katherine Mansfield. I do not mean that the room was filled with her 'presence'; but that her 'presence' was given to my consciousness simultaneously with the 'presence' that filled the room. I have to apologize for using a word so unsatisfactory; but I am dealing not with an idea, but with an experience. No single one of my distinct physical senses was engaged; I saw, heard, felt, tasted, touched nothing. The 'presence' of Katherine Mansfield was of the same order as the 'presence' which filled the room and me. In so far as the 'presence' was connected with her it had a moral quality, or a moral effect: I was immediately and deeply convinced that 'all was well with her.' I use the familiar phrase deliberately, with all its fullness of certitude and lack of certainty.

It is difficult to be entirely veracious about such a matter; words are treacherous instruments in conveying an experience for which the consciousness of the subject is totally unprepared: but I think the account which I have given is as true as I can make it. I have not wittingly exaggerated or diminished any element in the experience itself or the circumstances which preceded it.

§ 8

Now what was I, an intellectual without a religion, to make of this strange happening which

had overtaken me? If I had been a Christian of any kind, it is clear to me that it would have been a triumphant confirmation of the high mysteries of my faith. If I had possessed or been inclined to a religion of any kind, I should have possessed the idiom to define and communicate the experience, and to distort it also. But I had no frame of reference in which to place it. It seemed to me of importance for other people; certainly it was of the utmost importance for myself. Since I was by profession a writer it was bound to influence my writing. It was obviously impossible that I should conceal it; yet it was extraordinarily difficult to declare it.

It was inevitable, as I see now, that I should blunder both in my statements and my actions. For a time I oscillated between something too like a conviction of inspiration to be distinguished from it, and a painful sense of positive delusion. I said and did foolish things; and I am not now surprised (though I was then) that I alienated some of my friends and gave my enemies cause to triumph. I veritably believed that some sort of endorsement by the Universe was guaranteed to all my doings, and that I could do no wrong. I did a good deal of wrong. I plunged, for example, into the asseveration that God exists, without any misgiving that God meant for most people something quite different from what God could possibly mean for me. Not until I was made painfully aware that constructions, which were to me illegitimate, preposterous

and sometimes nauseating, were being put upon my words, did I see the necessity of imposing the most stringent intellectual criticism upon myself.

I began to read a certain amount of Christian mystical writing, less with a view of finding some companionship among the mystics, than of making clear to myself wherein my experience was like, and wherein it differed from theirs. One Christian mystic, in particular, I found so intimately congenial that for a time I delighted in him almost as a second self – Meister Eckhart. His account of the 'Eternal Rebirth of the Soul' was almost an exact description of my experience; and I shall not easily forget the shock of delighted recognition at certain of his words. After that rebirth, he says, 'the reborn soul is as the eye, which having gazed into the sun, thenceforward sees the sun in everything.' That beautiful phrase more nearly conveys the quality of vision during the days which followed my experience than any other words I know.

Chiefly from Meister Eckhart, but also from a more casual study of St. John of the Cross, I reached the firm conclusion that my experience, alike in itself and in its antecedent circumstances, was substantially the same as the experience of the Christian mystics; but without the Christianity. I thought I could see clearly enough that if I had been in any sense a believing Christian, convinced of the existence of God and of the possibility of intimate communion with Him, I should inevitably have

used their language and partaken of their certainties. But I was not a Christian. I could understand what they meant; my own experience made their meaning clear to me: but their idiom was alien, and unnecessary. I concluded therefore that Christianity was an accidental accompaniment of such experience.

It was some months before I full realized that the recipient, or the victim, of mystical experience who has no religion is in an awkward position. At first I had thought that I was in an enviable one. My isolation and inanition were at an end; suddenly, I had become a man with a mission, full of energy and conviction. Had I lived in another age, I do not doubt that I should have marched off with staff and scrip to spread the gospel in the highways; being set in the twentieth century, I launched a magazine to carry the good tidings. But what the good tidings were, I found it hard to say. I proclaimed 'a faith in life.' Various people helped me in the magazine. For some strange reason I took it for granted that substantially their faith was the same as my own, which seems, in retrospect, an incredible assumption. But since I did not know what my own faith really was, it was easy to be satisfied. The combination of their good writing and my own enthusiasm made the magazine an alarming success. I was quite incapable of analysing the causes of this success, and I naively took it as a confirmation of my own fundamental rightness. After a few months of this comfortable

illusion, I discovered with amazement that the readers of the magazine were shocked by some remarkable essays by D. H. Lawrence, and that the contributors for the most part disapproved of each other and all disapproved of me. I gradually learned that it was thought that I was ruining a magazine which had begun with an unusual chance of success. After the shock of amazement, I could see that it was true. I was ruining, and was bound to ruin, the magazine as some of my collaborators conceived it, for the simple reason that the magazine as they conceived it, and the magazine as I conceived it, were and had been from the beginning utterly different things. On the one side was the idea of the magazine as a good literary review, on the other was the idea of the magazine as the organ for exploring the possibility of a new religion. The ideas were quite irreconcilable.

This disappointing episode is in itself of small importance. I have mentioned it only as a clear instance of the confusion in which I was involved. In reality I was a self-appointed prophet, with a whole system of certainties which I had had no time, and perhaps no capacity, to explicate. I had become passionately convinced of a truth of a kind that must be called religious, yet I was, no less than before, completely without attachment, or desire to be attached, to Christianity or any *form* of religion. The very notion of a form of religion was absolutely excluded by my experience. I began rather pain-

fully to realize that I, who had been induced to imagine for a time that I had much in common with many men, was more isolated than before. There was only one man I knew with whom I thought I was in any sort of fundamental agreement; that was D. H. Lawrence. We had been friends for a good many years. Towards the end of the war, we had become estranged. I could not understand his writing any more; it seemed to me wrong and dangerous, and I had attacked it vehemently. But now what he was driving at had become perfectly clear to me. He was proclaiming the necessity of that absolute spiritual regeneration, that passing beyond the intellectual consciousness, which I in my fashion had experienced. Our ways were not, indeed, the same. That was inevitable; we were different men, differently constituted, and with a vast difference of natural gifts; but I thought we were agreed in the essential; nothing else mattered.

He was coming back to England from New Mexico. I felt that much depended upon his coming. If we could reach an actual agreement upon what was to be done, all would be well. We met; in a little while the practical issue was clear. I wanted him to stay in England, to take over the magazine, while I would be his second in command. He wanted me to leave England, to throw up the magazine and help him found the nucleus of a new community in New Mexico. He was convinced that nothing could be done with England, that maga-

zines were only playthings, and that a new beginning must be made. I began to waver,

> Like to a vagabond flag upon the stream
> Went to and back, lackeying the varying tide
> To rot itself with motion.

Once more, the condition I had believed to be for ever past was upon me again. I was hopelessly divided. Was he right, or I? To this day, I cannot tell.

§ 9

He left, and I remained; more, I fell in love and married again. I went to live in a remote part of Dorsetshire, and settled myself to the task of trying to bring order into my convictions.

I know not how, but I had become persuaded that Shakespeare was the true embodiment of that attitude to life which I believed to be most satisfying and profound. I had studied Shakespeare steadily now for some years, and had convinced myself that the evolution which had assumed such violent forms in me was discernible, with an infinite richness of detail and opulence of expression, in Shakespeare's work. He, coming after the collapse of Orthodoxy, had passed through all our modern discontents, and reached a modern solution. His non-religious religion, his acceptance of the pure phenomenon, his flexible submission to all experience, his refusal of all

absolutes, marked him out as the prophetic man. He was the prophylactic at once against illusion and against despair.

I discerned, or thought I discerned, an intimate relation between Jesus and Shakespeare. Take the primary conviction of the existence of God away from Jesus, I thought, and you have a Shakespeare. That may sound far-fetched; but I still believe it to be true, and that I subsequently made some advance towards demonstrating what was at that time largely an intuitive conviction. Chiefly by means of a more or less continuous controversy with T. S. Eliot, I became conscious that I was working towards a new theory of Romanticism, in which the cardinal figures were Jesus and Shakespeare. I find a pretty clear statement of my position in an essay written in riposte to Mr. Eliot's defence of Classicism. It is dated November, 1923, that is to say about six months after my experience; and it seems to show that my mind had moved pretty fast and pretty far.

'Romanticism and Classicism are perennial modes of the human spirit. They have existed in all times and in all places. The Catholic Church, which is essentially classical, has contained without bursting a good many romantic movements; and Christianity itself, which is essentially romantic, has endured the imperial classicism of the Roman Church without being altogether destroyed. And long before Christianity and far outside the Western world, the opposition in other names and forms, has surely

existed. It is indeed impossible to conceive the human spirit as operant save in one or other of these modes. The labels are of to-day or yesterday; but the realities are of all time. The history of the human soul is the story of romanticisms organized into classicisms, and classicisms rebelled against and defeated by romanticisms.'

'But in this history of the human soul there are epochs. We choose the one nearest to us for two excellent reasons: we know most about it, and we are ourselves involved in it. This epoch manifestly begins with the Renaissance and the Reformation. The Renaissance was the rebellion of a great Romanticism against a secular Classicism. The individual asserted himself against the external spiritual authority, consolidated and actual throughout the Middle Ages, of the Roman Church; he vindicated his right to stand or fall by his own experience, to explore the universe for himself. That is the beginning of modern Romanticism: Shakespeare is its prophetic voice, modern as no other voice of the past is modern, valid, completely valid, until this epoch of man's spiritual history shall end: Romantic through and through, and Romantic to the very verge of human experience.

'Man, at the Renaissance, vindicated his right to explore the universe for himself, and to stand or fall by his own experience of it. From that moment onwards generations of men began to go through the slow process of rediscovering for themselves truths

which a representative and prophetic man like Shakespeare had discovered in himself and symbolically uttered. First and foremost, that there are two universes to explore: without and within, the external and the internal world. The exploration of the external world was at first more exciting; but by the time Dampier and Anson had girdled the globe, the more chilling discovery of Galileo had begun to penetrate. The earth was parochial; the inhabitants thereof positively trivial. The first fine frenzy of God-destruction cooled to an uneasy suspicion that a worse than the comer in dyed garments from Bozra had been imperceptibly enthroned – Necessity. The external world was uncomfortably revealed as a world of law, but without a bearded law-giver. Voltaire cachinnated over the spectacle; Rousseau refused to believe in it. While Diderot in his Encyclopædia went on with the task of charting the external world, Jean-Jacques turned his back on it, looked at the internal world, and made the mistake of propounding its fundamental truth in terms of the external world to which it did not apply. 'Man is born free; he is everywhere in chains.' That was Romantic in the limited modern sense. What Rousseau meant to say – or at least what Rousseau ought to have said – was: 'Man *is* free; and he is everywhere subject to necessity.' That might have been less dramatic and less moving; some might say it would have been less Romantic, and more true.

'But, as a matter of fact, though it is seldom recognized, there are two degrees in Romanticism. The name is generally confined to the more elementary of the two; the more advanced has no name at all, apparently because it has not yet been clearly isolated and distinguished. And no thorough-going anatomy of Romanticism is possible at all unless it is referred to the fundamental paradox of human existence and human knowledge. This paradox, acute at various stages in the recorded history of the human soul, became peremptory at the Renaissance, when man claimed once more his full and indefeasible freedom to explore the universe. It has remained peremptory, though sometimes its urgency has been concealed, ever since.

'The paradox is this: as man seeks to know the universe, he finds outside him a realm of necessity and within him a realm of freedom; and he finds, moreover that to know the external world as a world of necessity is the necessary condition of knowing it at all, and likewise that to know the internal world as a world of freedom is the necessary condition of knowing it at all. These knowledges are both alike knowledge; yet they are different in kind and contradictory in content. The two degrees of Romanticism correspond to the two degrees of awareness of this paradox. The more elementary phase is marked by a passionate vindication of the freedom of the self, of which there is immediate knowledge. The primary Romantic, as we may call him, is aware of

the realm of necessity hardly more than as a menace against which he is in instant rebellion. He retires defiantly into the fortress of the ego, and proclaims that the world wherein his felt sovereignty and freedom no longer hold is a world of illusion. He solves the mystery of the cosmos by an appeal to his immediate experience, and unites by proclamation the kingdom of necessity to his own kingdom of freedom. The warrant for this proclamation is an act of what is generally called mystical perception.

'Now the question arises: What validity and scope are to be attached to this mystical perception? It is real enough – only fools presume to doubt its reality. But whereas the primary romantic claims for it a comprehensive ontological truth, as a revelation of the actual structure of the universe; the secondary romantic does not. It seems to him dangerous, one-sided and untrue to dismiss the external world as a world of illusion; and he knows that it is impossible to live by these moments of mystical apprehension, and that they can only be maintained at the cost of a certain spiritual duplicity; on the other hand, he knows their reality. So he regards them as indications, prophetic monitions, of some as yet undeveloped faculty of apprehension in the human mind, and of some underlying reality with which, lacking that faculty, the human mind cannot permanently establish contact. Thus he comes to regard the fundamental paradox not as an insoluble contradiction in the nature of reality, but

as a congenital limitation of human vision. Humanity, being what it is and where it is, is compelled to consider its universe under the aspects of without and within, under the categories of necessity and freedom. But the reality of that universe is truly apprehended under neither of these categories. And, although it is foolish to attempt even by way of parable a description of the reality of the universe, in order to make a tenuous thought more tangible we may risk saying that the reality might be imagined as an organic and living whole: in which there would be necessity and freedom, but the necessity would not be the necessity of intellectual apprehension, and the freedom would be other than the freedom of which I am immediately conscious in myself.

'This rejection of a one-sided and egocentric solution of the paradox of freedom and necessity, which distinguishes those whom I have called "secondary" Romantics, does not in itself offer a solution. But it hints at the way by which a solution might be found. If the human consciousness is by nature incapable of apprehending the world of its experience save under contradictory categories, then we must wait for a change in the very nature of human consciousness. To some minds, perhaps to most minds, such a notion will seem fantastic and incredible. To others, for example, to those who read anthropology as the record of the reality of the human soul, the notion will be neither fantastic nor

incredible. And certainly this notion possessed the three of the greatest creative minds of the literature which is truly modern. It was the final word of Shakespeare, of Tolstoi, and of Dostoevsky. To make such an assertion *sans phrase*, especially in the case of the first member of the trinity, is painful to me as a literary critic; but the justification of my assertion would fill more than a volume.

'I hope I have at least succeeded in sketching out a scheme within which the question of Romanticism must be placed in order that its importance may be seen and its implications appreciated. If I have, and if the scheme is accepted, then it seems to me to follow immediately that the real question to be answered in regard to any Romanticism at any time, is not whether Romanticism is true, but whether it is necessary or expedient at a particular stage in the secular adventure of the human soul. Mr. Eliot has asked, "Is it *right?*" And there by, I think, to some extent, showed that even he was not wholly aware of the nature of the problem. For "right" may mean "true," or it may mean "expedient": it may be a judgment of propositions or of conduct. And it seemed to me that Mr. Eliot had not yet formed a clear notion of which "rightness" he was asking for.

'Of course, it is possible, though I cannot believe it probable, that Mr. Eliot holds that in all times and in all places Romanticism is untrue and inexpedient. It would be a strange position for a student of anthropology and an admirer of Elizabethan litera-

ture. And, if my scheme is accepted, the judgment that Romanticism is untrue will appear as a judgment without import, and the judgment that it is always inexpedient nothing less than the utterance of a conservatism that, were it possible, would have held humanity fast in the protozoic slime. . . .

'Ah, but this "reliance upon instinct" – is it anything, asks Mr. Eliot, but the old principle of anarchy: To do what you like? Well, I admit that it is not easy to *define* the difference; and since a classicist must believe that nothing really exists that cannot be defined, and indeed that things *are* in virtue of their definitions, it is difficult for me to meet him here. Yes, of course, to rely upon instinct is, in a sense, to do what you like. And perhaps (though I do not believe it) to do what you like may seem rather easy to Mr. Eliot. To me, on the contrary, it seems the hardest thing in the world. For to know what you really like means to know what you really are; and that is a matter of painful experience and slow exploration. To discover that within myself which I *must* obey, to gain some awareness of the law which operates in the organic whole of the internal world, to feel this internal world as an organic whole working out its own destiny according to some secret vital principle, to know which acts and utterances are a liberation from obstacles and an accession of strength, to acknowledge secret loyalties which one cannot deny without impover-

ishment and starvation, – this is to possess one's soul indeed, and it is not easy either to do or to explain. And yet I believe that it can be done without deceiving oneself; and I also believe that we have the faculty of recognizing instantly when another has achieved this consummation.

'And when this consummation is achieved, a man is free, he is sovereign of his own inward world, and, kinglike, he can do no wrong. He is also obedient, for in any true exploration of the self, he must encounter that which is greater than himself; he also, no less than the classicist, submits to authority, but the authority is discovered by his own free act and recognized by his own free will. He surrenders his personal, vain, and exclusive *ego* and finds himself.

'I might go on trying to describe this process for pages, without bringing one atom more conviction to those who find it incredible. It seems to me that this is one of the things which you either know or don't know; and that it is impossible to build a bridge between those two conditions. But I maintain that a complete romanticism demands a new discipline of the soul. Whether this discipline appears like anarchy to those who have no inkling of it – as indeed I suppose it must appear – seems to me of no great moment. I should like to be able to convince my sincere opponents; but I fear the ability is not in me.

'Instead I will try to sum up certain of my chief contentions. Ethically, Romanticism is an attempt

to solve the problem of conduct by an exploration of the internal world. If this exploration is complete it will result in an immediate knowledge of what I am and may not do. The implication of the certainty of this knowledge is that at some point in this non-intellectual exploration of the self a contact is established between the finite soul and the infinite soul of which it is a manifestation. This mystical implication is borne out by the felt quality and validity of certain crucial experiences. But it is not necessary to insist upon this, and in this exposition I have avoided doing so.

'Nevertheless, some sense of this implication is essential to a real romantic; it helps to determine his attitude and to shape his belief that there is an underlying harmony in the external universe, of which he may have partial and momentary premonitions. In virtue of these he may regard the perceived nature of the external universe as an illusion. But this form of romanticism is incomplete. The more resolute romantic accepts the reality of the external universe, and finds the cause of its contradiction with the internal world – a contradiction theologically expressed as the opposition of free-will and necessity – in a limitation of the human consciousness. He believes that the human consciousness has not yet reached the point in its own development where it is capable of truly apprehending reality; such a change he believes to be inevitable, and towards such a change he strives.'

§ 10

That is, on the whole, a clearer and more comprehensive statement of my position than I had believed it possible for me to have made in October, 1923, six months after my experience. What I then had in mind was an attempt to display the spiritual evolution of Shakespeare. The practical opportunity came when I was invited to deliver the Clark Lectures at Cambridge. I set to work. After some months of labour, I found that my subject was far too big for a dozen lectures: I had written six, and Shakespeare had not yet appeared. For the idea had come to me that the simplest way to clear a path for my conception of Shakespeare was to take the simpler case of John Keats. Keats, I had discovered, had had the same conception of Shakespeare that I had formed; Keats was, it was now universally admitted, a poet of the same essential kind as Shakespeare – a Shakespeare in miniature, so to speak. I thought I was capable of giving a convincing demonstration that Keats had developed in a certain way, hitherto unsuspected by criticism. If I could make this to be admitted, I should at least have prepared the way for a more friendly reception of my conception of Shakespeare as a great prophetic figure.

This notion of mine concerning Shakespeare was stonily regarded. Perhaps it was because my first enthusiastic and extravagant utterances after my experience had made me to be considered an incal-

culable crank, with a new kind of religious bee in his bonnet. But in truth my notion of Shakespeare was no new conception. Great men had held it before me – Lessing, Novalis, Goethe, Coleridge, Keats and Melville. Indeed my own language concerning Shakespeare was sobriety itself compared with that of Goethe and Coleridge. But for some reason or other the convictions of these two great philosophic critics about Shakespeare were ignored. That was no new happening either: I had been violently struck by the frequency and determination with which the strange and difficult sayings of great men are ignored. To make a man a classic is to make him innocuous, very much in the same way as making Jesus divine has made him harmless. Classics and Gods share the privilege of talking nonsense. For a critic to take the serious utterances of great men seriously is likewise to talk nonsense – only without privilege.

Perhaps (I thought) if I could persuade people to take Keats seriously, I should make it possible for them to take Shakespeare seriously. An odd little verse which I found hidden in Herman Melville's poetry served me as a good omen for my enterprise. It expressed precisely my own conviction.

No utter surprise can come to him
  Who pierces Shakespeare's core:
That which we seek and shun is there –
  Man's final lore.

If I was mad, I was mad in good company.

I found, as I began to study Keats once more for my purpose, that the details of his inward progress were marked with extraordinary clarity. The wonder was not that I was able to follow them, but that no one had done so before. The intimate connection between the pure mystical and the pure poetic experience was manifest. Keats had passed (in the spring of 1819) through essentially the same experience as that described by Meister Eckhart as 'the Eternal Rebirth of the Soul,' and he had given an account of it in his famous letter on the World as a Vale of Soul-making in terms far nearer to those which were naturally mine than any I had found among the mystics. My belief that progress of this kind is essentially independent of any particular form of religion straightway became a conviction.

§ II

Since I was, by profession and inclination, a literary critic, not the least of whose barren perplexities had been the failure to find any intellectual sanction for those values in creative literature which to my intuitive nature were supreme, the discovery that Keats had undergone a kindred desolation and received a kindred illumination was of very great importance to me; for this evolution of Keats was not independent of his progress as a pure poet: it was, on the contrary, inextricably bound up with it.

I felt that I was on the brink of discovering the true significance of Poetry. Here was the poet, whose pure poetic power was reckoned by me and by others of more competence than myself, as second only to Shakespeare's in the English language, and of the same order as his, revealed as having passed through a very particular kind of spiritual progress, without understanding which his work could not be understood. I glimpsed the beginnings of an order in my new universe. Poetry was no longer a strange and irrelevant loveliness in a chaotic world; it was a necessary and consummate flowering on the great tree of Life; it was the immanent purpose of the universe made vocal.

To reduce a surmise of this kind to any degree of intellectual clarity was not the work, for such a thinker as myself, of moments or days, but of months and years. I was convinced that a clue had been put in my hands. For the moment I could do no more than apply it to the particular case of Keats; I thought I saw how to apply it to Shakespeare also. For the moment I was content to try to expound it in a way that should be convincing to other minds than my own in a book upon Keats. *Keats and Shakespeare* was the result. I believe that, considered as a strict historical account of Keats's simultaneous progress as man and poet, that book will stand. There is, as usual, a certain evidence of exaltation in the writing of the book, and it contains some premature generalizations, but as a piece of

interpretative criticism, it is (I believe as firmly as I did in the excited days when I wrote it) both new and true.

The scepticism, and in some cases the downright anger, with which it was received by the critics, put me on my guard. I realized, still more acutely, that 'illuminations' are troublesome experiences. Now that my head was momentarily lifted from my concentration upon Keats, I was uncomfortably aware that a stigma of crankiness was permanently attached to me. The religious-minded, who had gladly received some of my early writings in *The Adelphi*, were by now completely disappointed in me; the literary critics were mistrustful or hostile. I was neither fish, nor fowl, nor good red-herring. Fortunately or unfortunately, there was nothing to be done but to go forward. I could not deny my experience; neither could I refuse the understanding of certain types of men which it seemed to have opened to me. To go back was impossible. To go forward at this point meant one thing alone: I must leave the complete intellectual clarification of the possibilities which my study of Keats had opened to me for a later time, and I must make up my mind about Jesus.

Even before my experience, as I have said, I had begun to be haunted by certain of his sayings. How long before this 'haunting' had begun, I cannot now remember; but there is evidence that in the two or three months before Katherine Mansfield's death,

some of the more mysterious sayings were constantly present to my mind. I was in a condition such that I felt that the man who proclaimed that one must lose one's life to save it had known my disease and found out the remedy. But *how* to lose one's life, was the question. After my experience, the sayings which had haunted me put off their mystery: they became simple, familiar and true. I began to read the New Testament in the Greek, for the first time since I was a schoolboy. To the annoyance of my friends, Jesus began to crop up pretty frequently in my writing. But I postponed the day of reckoning which I knew to be inevitable. I was reluctant to face it. I had managed to keep clear of Christianity, and I had no desire to become involved.

But there was no avoiding the issue. To delay any longer in making up my mind about Jesus would have been simple cowardice. The man of letters in me was eager to push on to Shakespeare; a more important man insisted upon Jesus. It was an uncomfortable decision. It had the effect of finally isolating me among my few remaining friends. One of the oldest of them wrote to me: 'I hear you are writing a life of Jesus. That is the last straw.' That hurt me not a little; I was quite unable to reply or to defend myself. I did not even understand the grounds of his objection.

I think, though I am not certain, that I know them now. It was already apparent that my method of approach to Jesus would be of the same order as

my method of approach to Keats. The mere fact that I had decided to write a life of Jesus meant that to some extent I claimed to understand his experience in virtue of my own. Such a claim was bound to be implicit in my book; and it sounds presumptuous. It should not actually be presumptuous to those who, like myself, are unable to regard Jesus as anything but a man, though a very great one. But even so it must be admitted that a method such as mine does involve placing oneself momentarily on a level with great men. If this is presumption, I have been guilty of it. But, equally, if this is presumption, criticism that is serious is in duty bound to presume, for there is nothing between presumption and incomprehension. I had begun to believe that, at least in part, I understood Jesus. That was the reason why I was drawn to write about him: I wished, if I could, to understand wholly what I believed I understood in part. But if the initial and partial understanding had been denied me, nothing would have induced me to make the attempt.

§ 12

I was not then, and I am not now, in myself aware of any presumption. I had been given an experience that enabled me to understand things that had been hidden from me for many years. A clue had been placed in my hands which it was my duty to follow where it led; and I was determined to follow it.

A means of understanding had been granted to me, and I must use it. To refuse was to deny myself.

So I set to work, and I found that more things were clear to me in the life of Jesus than I had imagined. I was convinced that his experience at his baptism as told in the primitive gospel of Mark was of the same order as my own. The voice which sounded in his ears alone telling him that he was God's beloved son, was a voice I might have heard, and perhaps did hear. The sense of being welcomed home after long wandering and despair, which found expression in that voice and in the parable of the Prodigal Son, I also had known. And to clear me, in my own mind, of any charge of presumption in this belief was the certain fact, which revealed itself as I pondered the teaching of Jesus, that he had believed not merely that it was possible, but that it was necessary, for all men to become, precisely as he, the beloved 'sons of God.' This was, indeed, the sum and substance of his message, this, and nothing else, was the 'good tidings' that he had preached. So far from being presumptuous in thus daring to relate his crucial experience with my own, I had unwittingly done precisely what he called upon men to do; I had stumbled upon 'the mystery of the Kingdom of God.' There was no authentic word spoken by Jesus concerning the Kingdom which I did not believe I understood.

Presumption? Perhaps; but the 'Kingdom of God suffereth violence,' and they know more about the

true meaning of the Kingdom as Jesus proclaimed it who know that 'presumption' was the mark of its members than those who exclaim against 'presumption.' The religion of Jesus was one supreme 'presumption.'

The essential facts were in my hands. For a 'life' of Jesus there are no materials. But all that we need to know is that the brief mission of Jesus began with a certain rare experience, that all his teaching was based upon it, that inevitably his teaching brought him into conflict (for 'presumption') with the authorities of his country, that after escaping from them to the foreign lands to the north, he deliberately returned to risk death in order that he might be manifested as the Messiah of Jewish expectation, and that he died in dereliction and despair. The inward struggle of his life, after his teaching had been rejected, to reconcile the certitude which he could not deny with the Messianic expectation – this might be imagined. It was in the nature of things that no account of this crucial evolution should have survived; it would indeed have been incredible, considering the abilities of his disciples as compared with his own, that any account should ever have been given to them. The marvel was that though all that had happened after his death, and in spite of the creation of a Christianity content to know him after the flesh no more, the main outlines of a great life and the authentic accents of a great wisdom should have survived.

My book was written. Again, with all its imperfections, I believe that it will stand, until a better book of the same essential kind is written by a wiser man than I. But the writing of the book was a great pain. It was a fearful thing to be required to watch that man die upon the Cross, and to hear his *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani!* Why, why? I asked myself again and again. And there were moments when I veritably believed that in the strange pain and joy of my heart, pain at his suffering, joy at the amazing revelation of what it could be to be a Man, and in the ecstasy of acceptance which followed these, an answer was given. It was necessary that there should be that sublime revelation of the beauty and terror of life, in order that hearts and minds like mine should be lifted beyond themselves in contemplating it. But for that death, how should we know, how should we understand?

More than this, how should we learn? There was illusion, not in the experience of Jesus, but in his ultimate interpretation of his experience. He was not, and could not be, the Messiah of Jewish expectation. That superhuman figure had, and could have, no human counterpart. When Jesus was rejected by his fellow-men, and conceived that he might himself become the Messiah, in the place of that Messiah for whom he had waited in vain, illusion had taken hold of him. Yet what could he have done, being rejected? He could not deny his experience, or recant his teaching. The experience

was real, the teaching was true. Had he refused to go onward, his very name might have been lost for ever.

My mind began to be turmoiled with strange thoughts. It was clear to me that Jesus, being what he was, a Galilean villager of nineteen hundred years ago, brought up in the mighty religion of Israel, must inevitably have interpreted his experience to himself as a direct revelation of the nature of God; he had passed into communion with a loving God. Even I, utterly without religion, completely devoid of the will to believe, totally lacking in all that exquisite humanity which was Jesus' birthright, could scarcely resist such an interpretation of my own experience. Given that, he would first believe, as he did, that all men would understand and come to share his experience of God; when that belief was disappointed, and he was left alone in his experience of God, he was bound to believe that he was destined to be Messiah. One true disciple would have saved him from the inevitable illusion. He found none. Perhaps the truest was Judas, who may have believed that Jesus *might* become the Messiah, and may have helped him to his sacrificial death.

But now, not least by my knowledge of the fate of Jesus, I was safeguarded against such an interpretation of an experience like his, as his first interpretation had been. That experience of communion, that passing in an instant from an incredible extreme of isolation to a profound experience of

oneness, was not communion with a loving and ineffable God. What was it then? It was not what Jesus had imagined it to be. But what was this exaltation into which I was irresistibly drawn by my faithful attempt to follow Jesus' life to the end? Then again, and as often as I could find in myself the courage to renew the experience, the flood-gates were opened, and some strange faculty seemed to possess me. I felt that I understood; that some unspeakable truth and beauty were revealed to me in that Man's agony and bitter death. Was that the revelation of God? Was that the nature of the Oneness which I had directly experienced? Was I condemned to be a Christian after all?

§ 13

There were months when I trembled on the verge of Orthodoxy. I was now completely isolated, in a way in which I had never been isolated before; and the fascination of Orthodoxy was great. But I could not forget that intrinsically the same sense of revelation that was awakened in me by my contemplation of the life and death of Jesus, had been awakened by my contemplation of the life and death of John Keats. *Eloi, Eloi!* had its counterpart in the words of Keats's agony: 'Oh, Brown, I have coals of fire in my heart. It surprises me that the human heart is capable of containing and bearing so much misery.' Orthodoxy required me to sacrifice Keats to Jesus,

to believe that the life and death of Jesus was *the* revelation, and the life and death of Keats was not. Was I to deny my heroes and my truth? Would Jesus himself have required this thing of me?

It was plain that he would not. To the Jesus who was real to me, Keats would have been a brother, – a son of God by precisely the same title as himself. To know what I knew, and to suffer myself to acquiesce in the demand that the life and death of Jesus must be the sole and central revelation of the meaning and mystery of life, would have been a self-betrayal from which I could never have recovered. I could see, better than many Christians, the significance of the symbol that is in the life and death of Jesus; I could see the folly of those who imagined that Orthodoxy was an old wives' tale, that would vanish at the touch of their one-sided enlightenment; I could see that there was a great, a profound and a still operative truth at the heart of Christianity; but I could also see that precisely those who truly understood that truth, understood also that it was not, and could not be, contained in the life and death of Jesus alone. The mission of a true Christianity was to destroy itself.

I was saved, perdurably, from the temptation to Orthodoxy. I could admire, and envy, the spiritual order which was based upon it; I could appreciate the treasures of psychological wisdom which are gathered up in the tradition of the Christian Church. But for the sake of wisdom and order to sacrifice

truth – a truth which had come to me with such pain – that was impossible. It was possible, it was probable, that I should find few to understand, and fewer to agree, that the mission of the Christian Church was to deny, with full knowledge, the uniqueness of its own revelation; from the practical point of view I was condemned to a hopeless position. I had nothing in common either with Christians, or with the enemies of Christianity; with those who professed to worship Christ, or those who professed to ignore him. To me, both alike denied the truth, and darkened the light. There was nothing for it but to struggle on.

By this time my own experience had grown faint. It had been for me the key of entrance into two great lives, and it was in their experience now that I renewed my own continually. The tragic consummation of those lives, once understood from within, and re-lived in imagination, had been a new revelation. Here was the very reality of tragedy: these things had been, and they were beautiful. Again and again, as I re-lived the exaltations and re-endured the agonies of those men, the extraordinary feeling of serene illumination would flood my soul – the feeling that is so wonderfully expressed in our English chant of the *Nunc dimittis:* 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen my salvation.' Even as a schoolboy that chant had meant more to me than anything else in the whole of the Church service; its sad and sweet

solemnity moved me always to the verge of tears. It was marvellous to me that the familiar chant, to which I had not listened for at least a dozen years, should now have taken on such depths of meaning. To that new *Nunc dimittis* my experience had led me; it was the requiem of archangels over the men whom my experience had enabled me to understand. If that experience had grown faint in itself, it also had died to live, more fully, in my experience of these men.

§ 14

Now where was I? What had I learned? I had learned, it seemed, that a spiritual progress was possible to man, by which out of the discordant elements of his being – the desire of the Heart and the knowledge of the Mind – a harmony was created. This harmony was a new kind of being, and it had been called by Jesus and Eckhart and Keats, the Soul. This Soul was at once a new condition of the total human being and a faculty of knowledge. It was aware of the universe as a harmony, and of itself as a part of that harmony; and this awareness was a joyful awareness. This was the ground of the mystical faith that the Soul was consubstantial with God. God, in this mystical sense, was the inseparable counterpart of the Soul; and the Soul, in the process and very moment of becoming aware of its own self-existence, became also aware of the existence of an omnipresent God

of which itself was, as it were, a focus of self-knowledge.

This strange and simple process was the 're-birth' which Jesus had taught, and which was the central mystery of all high religion. It could occur in complete independence of any particular religion; it was the outcome of an internecine conflict between the desire of the Heart and the knowledge of the Mind. The condition of its occurrence seemed to be that the fearful opposition between the desire of the Heart and the knowledge of the Mind should not be slurred, but faced and brooded over, until the man thus tried reached an extremity of exhaustion and inward division, when in the words of Tchehov there was nothing left for him but 'to beat his head against the wall.' This conflict between Heart and Mind, between feeling and knowledge, was obviously independent of religion, in any ordinary sense of the word. It was simply incidental to humanity. Man, being man, was bound to endure this conflict. If he did not endure it, he was less than man, in the sense that he was turning away from something which it was his duty as a man to look upon. Yet it was certain that men did not look upon it. If they glanced at it, they turned their eyes hurriedly aside. They were afraid of what they might see. Some deep instinct of self-preservation warned them that they would be turned to stone. Their energies for action would be paralysed. So they shut their eyes to it. Some drugged themselves with a religion

which assured them that the desires of the Heart would be realized, and that death was only the doorway to life; some sought forgetfulness in busy plans for the amelioration of human circumstance; some sought to live in the moment. But there were always a few on whom these opiates failed to work. By some queer destiny the conflict was forced upon them. Heart and Mind in them insisted each upon its rights, and the claims could not be reconciled. There was a deadlock in the centre of their being, and they passed steadily into a condition of isolation, inanition, abandonment and despair. Their inward division was complete.

Then came, out of that extreme and absolute division, a sudden unity. A new kind of consciousness was created in them. Mind and Heart, which had been irreconcilable enemies, became united in the Soul, which loved what it knew. The inward division, which had divided the human being also from the universe of his knowledge, was healed; in a single happening, man became one in himself and one with all that was without him. He knew that he was called upon to play his part in the harmony revealed to him.

This was the great secret of religion; but only because it was the great secret of life. Men who learned and obeyed it, became different. They were a new kind of men. They gained no happiness, nothing that the world accounts desirable came to them, their lives burned out in a blaze of sorrow and

broken hopes: but an extraordinary beauty was manifest in them. Was it that for one blinding moment the veil of the hidden God was drawn?

That is the question which this book attempts to answer. That is the point which I had reached, when the remainder of this book was begun. It is an attempt to connect, to expand, to order, and above all to criticize, all that is implicit in this piece of autobiography, and to separate out from it the elements of dependable verity from the elements of illusion it may contain. That is to say, the further progress of this narrative is contained in the pages which follow, although they have a different form.

§ 15

But there was one great danger in the intense contemplation of Keats and Jesus into which I had been drawn. 'After all,' said D. H. Lawrence in *The Adelphi* once, and thereby diminished the circulation by one half, 'Jesus was a failure.' I do not at all believe it to be true; but it emphasizes a truth which I at least was for ever in danger of forgetting – namely, that these two heroes of mine came to disaster. Their tragedy is a revelation, I am absolutely convinced. But life is not all tragedy. As Goethe wrote in his essay on Winckelmann, 'When a man is sane and healthy, when he feels that his nature is acting as a whole and that he is living in a Whole which itself is great and noble and beautiful

. . . then, if the Universe could see itself it would cry aloud that it had reached its goal and shout for glory at the triumph it had won. For what would be the good of all the stars and the galaxies, all the comets and the nebulæ, all the worlds that are made and a-making, if in the end there were no happy man alive to enjoy instinctively his own happiness?'

Not that Jesus and Keats were not happy men. They were; and I am pretty much convinced that if we desire to know what kind of man Jesus was, we can get a fairly just picture from the spontaneous, happy, deep-thinking, humble, generous, tender Keats of the Letters before his grim destiny had closed upon him. With all their unmitigable sorrows, they were far happier men than most of those who live their full span and die quietly in their beds. True they were men to whom

> the miseries of the world
> Are misery, and will not let them rest.

But they were also men who, out of their despair, wrought a great and life-giving conviction. They were rich natures: in them there was God's plenty, as Dryden said of Chaucer.

It was not in me. Moreover Fate had now for a second time condemned me to spend long months as the impotent witness of a loved one's pain. There was a real danger that I, in my efforts to find the courage for my own private living, should become

obsessed with the contemplation of suffering. One has to find one's own method of accepting one's destiny, and mine certainly lay in wringing exaltation and confidence out of the continual realization of these unbearable tragedies. But there was a sense in which this was only a private faith, warped by subjectivity. My duty, and my safeguard against a special illuminism of my own, was to work out, as best I could, more sober conclusions.

That is the aim and purpose of this book. I have called it *God*, because it is concerned, almost wholly, though in progressively less and less familiar forms, with the reality for which great men have used that name. As the foregoing narrative bears witness, I have had an unusual experience of that reality. 'God' and I, one might almost say, are a little tired of each other. It is time for us to part. This book is the story of the parting. It seems to me that we part on good terms, better, far better, than I should have ever imagined possible. The last possibility of my nourishing resentment against him is dissolved away; likewise the last possibility of his requiring worship from me. He becomes too vast to be my friend, too intimate to be my enemy.

PART II

I

THE NEW MAN

§ 1

By a coincidence I find myself beginning these words on the morning of Good Friday, 1929. Since the old monkish computer made a mistake in his calculation of the Christian era, there is some warrant or some excuse for believing that it is to-day exactly nineteen hundred years since Jesus of Nazareth was crucified. It is a perfect spring day; the sky is blue and cloudless. For the vast majority of my countrymen this is a day of holiday. On motor-bicycles, in motor-cars, in excursion trains, they are hurrying into the country and to the sea. To-morrow morning in my newspaper there will be gay pictures of young women bathing happily at Southend and Brighton; and I shall be glad that the day was one to give them the opportunity of so much happiness.

By the Christian tradition this should be a day of mourning. All these people who gaily grasp their day of freedom, and have no thought for the agony of their Redeemer, if judged by the tradition, are very un-Christian. Yet if they are judged by the wisdom of the man from whom the tradition took birth, they are in the right. There is not much doubt that, if he had been alive to-day, he would

have been with the holiday-makers, and not the mourners. He whom the traditionalists of his own day could plausibly represent as a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, and the friend of publicans and harlots; whose word of humane wisdom: 'The Sabbath is made for man, not man for the Sabbath,' was probably the occasion of the traditionalists' resolve to destroy him, would have been found at Southend rather than St. Paul's.

There are, in fact, two traditions of Christianity: one conscious, the other unconscious, one organized, the other free. The people which ceases to be Christian in the one sense, does not necessarily cease to be Christian in the other. Not that to go to Southend and bask on the beach in the sun is an essentially Christian act; it is a natural act: but those who perform it are certainly as near to being Christ-like (which is not quite the same as being Christian) as those who are sedate and sober and sorrowful in a Church, and perhaps a good deal nearer.

But it is not permitted to be dogmatic on the point. We may be certain that if Jesus had to choose between a Good Friday holiday, and a day of solemn mourning in the religion of the Pharisees, he would have chosen the former. But Good Friday was not in the religion of the Pharisees; it is one of the great days in the religion of Christianity. Perhaps the setting would have made all the difference. The Good Friday of Christianity might have satisfied

Jesus, and he might have preferred its sadness to the gaiety of Southend.

That is the implicit claim of Christianity. We state it paradoxically, in order that the issue may be clear. We need to imagine Christ confronted with the religion which has grown out of him. We do not need to imagine him confronted with all the inevitable trivialities and hypocrisies of that religion in act. No great or noble idea has ever been perfectly embodied in an earthly organization. Christ, we may be sure, would have been able quickly to separate the essentials from the accidentals.

The essential of the religion of Christianity is simple. 'On the third day he rose from the dead.' If that is true in a certain definite sense, then there is very little in the doctrines of Christian Orthodoxy that may not be true. Unfortunately for clarity, the meaning of 'On the third day he rose from the dead' is not unambiguous. The persistence, in the case of certain outstanding men, of life after death in a mode which I call metabiological, is, as I shall try to show, a fact of common experience: it is a simple datum for science, so soon as science becomes capable of acknowledging it. And no example of this metabiological persistence is more conspicuous than that of Jesus himself. If that were all that was asserted of Jesus when it is said that 'On the third day he rose from the dead,' I at least should be unable and unwilling to deny it. But, if that were all, it could never serve as the foundation of Christianity. That something essen-

tial, or quintessential, in the personality of Jesus survived his bodily death, and was apprehensible by some of those who had loved and followed him, is not miraculous; it belongs, I am ready to believe, to the order of nature. The simple fact that a like experience befell me, and that I am able to believe it befell some of the followers of Jesus, makes it an impossible foundation for Christianity. If the resurrection of Jesus is only such a resurrection as may, and perhaps will, befall any man, no faith in his 'divinity' can be built upon it.

That he rose again from the dead means, in the fabric of Christianity, one thing and one thing only: that he rose again in the physical body. Men heard, saw, and touched him. That, if it was true, was a unique event. Fortunately, there is no evidence for it as a unique event. For there is precisely the same kind of evidence for the bodily resurrection of all manner of uninteresting people. If we are required to take the evidence of the Gospels seriously on this matter, then we must take just as seriously the evidence for innumerable bodily resurrections. The event, if true, ceases to be unique.

For my own part, I am heartily glad of it. It would distress me greatly to be condemned to live in a universe in which an event so stupid might happen; just as I should be sorry indeed if this were a world in which five loaves and two small fishes might feed five thousand people. To have to think

that the children of the South Wales miners live hungrily every day – children, whom Jesus chiefly loved – in a world where a word from him might satisfy them all from a single loaf and a pound of butter, would be too horrible. The world in which we live is mysterious, and hard to understand: but its great merit is that it does not appear to be stupidly cruel. Cruel, perhaps, but not stupid; evil, perhaps, but not malignant. The first thing for me to do in the world of Christian Orthodoxy would be to blow my brains out.

The bodily resurrection of Jesus appears to me an event as stupid as the multiplication of loaves and fishes – an utterly meaningless distortion of the natural order of things. And if I am told that its meaning is to convince me that Jesus was a supernatural being, I must reply very promptly that under no circumstances whatever could it convince me of any such thing: it simply revolts me. Fortunately, I am not required to believe it.

But since Christian Orthodoxy exists, many people must believe it, and not be revolted by it. All those many people cannot be less intelligent than myself. I must account for the seeming aberation, at least of those who are as intelligent as, or more intelligent than, myself. The only way I can account for it is by supposing that they do not really believe it. They believe something else, and suffer that belief to be expressed in the assertion that Jesus rose in the body. That strikes me as reprehensible;

but I have learned by experience that it is the habit of the human mind for certain important ends to connive at its own conviction. What is this something else which men believe and suppose to be expressed in the assertion that Jesus rose in the body from the dead?

It may be, I think, one of three things. It may be a belief that something essential, or quintessential, in the personality of Jesus survived his bodily death. But in that case there is nothing miraculous about the event. Therefore, I find it hard to suppose that this is what they believe. Or they believe something of a different order altogether, which is more interesting. They find in fact that when they contemplate the life and death of Jesus steadily and passionately, he lives again in their imagination, or in them. He dies in the body, but he lives in the spirit. That is true enough; it is a fact of experience which contains nothing contrary to reason. But once more, it is not miraculous, though science would find it hard to describe. Or there is yet a third possibility. They believe that Jesus rose in the body, and they believe it, like Tertullian, *because* it is miraculous, *because* it is stupid, *because* it is absurd. Somewhere, somehow, they must have a place for miracle in the universe: it is too bleak without, too commonplace.

I do not find the world bleak or commonplace. I find it often painful, often beautiful, always mysterious. The world, the universe, is one incessant

miracle to me. But to introduce particular miracles into it would at once take away the miraculousness which suffuses every portion of it. To make the ultimately unintelligible essence that is manifest in every single object before my eye at this moment the mere attendant of a divine caprice, would be too horrible. My mind rejects the notion with a loathing that is almost nausea. If I could really *believe* that once, veritably, Jesus rose in the body, I should go mad.

Tell me that the bodily resurrection of Jesus is only a symbol of the victory of a noble human spirit over defeat and death, and I can understand it. Tell me that in this legend the loving imagination of the human race for nineteen hundred years has found an object by contemplating which it found release from its misery, solution for its perplexities, and an awareness that in ways beyond man's understanding all is well, and I can revere it. Tell me that there was a time, in the childhood of the race, when men could not not-have-believed that their God, if he died, must necessarily have risen in the body from the dead, and I believe it to be true. But tell me that now in the year 1929 you veritably believe that Jesus rose bodily from the dead with the same simple conviction with which you believe that you are today alive, and will one day die, then I say that your world is a chaos, and more than this, that I believe you to be a liar.

It is impossible thus to believe in the bodily

resurrection of Jesus. Take that belief away from Christian Orthodoxy, and you take away the foundation-stone. The whole edifice begins to crumble. It crumbled long ago. That churches exist, that more are built, that people worship in them: these things are irrelevant. Orthodoxy as Faith may be intact; though Orthodoxy as Truth is in ruins.

We do not imagine that we have thus disposed of Christian Orthodoxy. Christian Orthodoxy, as we shall gladly and abundantly show, is too mighty a thing to fall at the puny trumpet-sound of Truth, even though it be seven times blown. It is built not upon Truth, but on something more permanent than Truth, namely the fact that the desire in man for Faith is deeper than his desire for Truth. We do not dispute this; we believe it to be true. Nevertheless, the number of men is steadily increasing for whom whatever Faith they may (or must) achieve must be coherent with whatever Truth they know. To them this book is addressed.

The position we have reached so far is simple. The central and essential belief of Orthodox Christianity is false, as history. Jesus did not rise bodily from the dead. Neither did he work miracles. We have his own word for that. The deity who multiplied fishes and loaves and who raised Lazarus from the tomb was assuredly not the man who said 'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign, and no sign shall be given it.' And the evidence is

that the man existed, and the deity did not. No one would have invented the saying – it was already a stone of offence to the author of Matthew, who deliberately garbled it – everyone would have invented the miracles. But that reason, though sound enough, is not the reason why we deny the truth of the bodily resurrection and of the miracles. The reason is that a world in which such things did veritably happen would be a contemptible and clap-trap world. The world is many things; but it is neither contemptible nor clap-trap. Its mystery is of another order than the mystery of a conjurer's show.

§ 2

Orthodoxy, it may be said, is not Christianity. The central belief of Orthodoxy may be false, but what of the Christianity which rejects it? It is true that there are innumerable varieties of Christianity which are ready to hedge on the bodily resurrection and discreetly to hide the miracles. It is quite impossible to say what you must believe nowadays in order to be counted a Christian. Very little, perhaps nothing: probably a good deal less than I myself believe. But Catholic Orthodoxy alone is Christianity, and Catholic Orthodoxy alone shall receive the name in these pages, for clarity's sake, if for none other. But also for the sake of honour and honesty.

For, the moment the bodily resurrection and the miracles have begun to dissolve away, there is no

halting-place. Sooner or later you are bound to reach the point at which you regard Jesus, if you regard him as a historical figure at all, simply and solely as a man. There is nothing divine about him. You may regard him (and you would be essentially obtuse if you did not) as a great and remarkable man, one of the greatest, perhaps even the greatest of all men; but for all that, simply a man, exactly as Shakespeare or Napoleon was a man. Some speak of the divine Shakespeare, and some Buonapartists of the divine Napoleon; in the same sense one might speak of the divine Jesus. But since the epithet 'divine' is traditionally used of Jesus in a totally different sense, to apply it to him in this completely human sense would be deliberate equivocation. Therefore we will be clear. There is nothing in the least 'divine' about Jesus, the moment we have denied his bodily resurrection and his miracles.

Equally it is clear we have, in denying these things, denied nothing that he believed to be of actual significance about himself. We have seen that he denied his miracles himself. He was not in a position to deny his bodily resurrection as an actual fact; for the good reason that it happened after he was dead. But he did, while living, very pointedly deny (in his answer to the Sadducees) his belief in a bodily resurrection. It is true enough that things may happen to a man in the possibility of which he does not believe; as Herman Melville wrote, 'even Stoics may be astounded into Heaven.' But that

Jesus was astounded into his own divinity is not a possible theory, either for Christian or critic. In that dispute with the Sadducees, who affirmed that there was no resurrection, Jesus affirmed two things at once: his belief in a resurrection, and his disbelief in a bodily resurrection. By that resurrection in which he affirmed his belief he obviously meant some new mode of existence wherein human relations of the kind we know are transcended. It would be folly to deny the possibility of such an avatar.

In other words, Orthodox Christianity is based upon the imposition upon Jesus of attributes which he himself either denied, or did not desire. On the other hand, if we, either by following our own reason, or from loyalty to him, or from both motives together, relieve him of the incubus, we deny his 'divinity.' That is reasonable enough. For there is not the faintest ground for supposing that he ever believed himself to be 'divine.' He believed that he was 'the son of God'; but he believed that all men were 'sons of God.' When he declared that he and his Father were one, it was but another way of proclaiming the same truth. It is possible, and perhaps probable, that at a certain crucial moment in his brief career as teacher and prophet he came to believe that he might be, or become, the Messiah of Jewish expectation. But that, in any case, could have happened only after his death. To imagine that he, a Jew, at any time in his life claimed to be God, or the son of God in any sense other than that

in which, as he believed, all men were sons of God, is fantastic.

There is no middle way between Orthodox Christianity and a completely realistic and historical attitude towards Jesus. Once the 'divine' ceases to be the miraculous, it ceases also to be the 'divine,' except by an equivocation. The poles are clear: either we accept Jesus as a supernatural, that is an unnatural, being, or we regard him as a wholly natural being. All that lies between is shifting sands. Our attitude before this choice is simple. The essential demand of Orthodoxy is that we should accept as true a series of events which are incomprehensible. If they were comprehensible, they would cease to have value for Orthodoxy; they would cease to evoke 'faith.' What is 'divine' in the Orthodox system is, by definition, what is incomprehensible. This position we utterly reject. We do not accept the category of the 'divine' at all. Not that we believe that all things are comprehensible; we believe that everything is comprehensible, and nothing is comprehensible, at the same moment. The whole order of nature is in one definite sense miraculous, and that is the only sense in which the word miraculous can be an epithet of reality. To this natural order belongs all things which have or have had existence. Jesus is among them.

Orthodoxy, and perhaps everything that can definitely be distinguished as a religion, depends upon a localization of the mystery of existence. It

declares that the mystery is here, and not there. This localization of the mystery of existence appears to be necessary in order to evoke the attitude of 'worship.' 'Worship' is essential to 'religion.' We reject utterly the attitude of 'worship' understood in this sense as the attitude evoked by a particular incomprehensible phenomenon. All pure phenomena are incomprehensible when viewed by the contemplative vision; but this universal incomprehensibility belongs to no one phenomenon more than to another. Moreover – and this is all-important – this universal incomprehensibility of things is absolutely compatible with their appearing natural. The identification of the incomprehensible and the unnatural is the error of Orthodoxy; the true identification is of the incomprehensible and the natural. Jesus is no more, and no less, mysterious than a flower.

'Man's loftiest experience is awe,' said Goethe in words which express precisely the truth on which we are trying to insist and shall insist again, 'and if the phenomenon as such can awe him, let him be satisfied. He will get no higher, and should not seek to go behind the experience.' It is as phenomenon, in this sense, that we seek to regard Jesus of Nazareth.

§ 3

It is perhaps necessary, before we try to contemplate Jesus as pure phenomenon in the natural order,

to spend a word upon the argument of those who deny his historical existence. To reply to these arguments is simple. If Jesus did not once himself exist, it would be necessary to suppose that someone else of precisely the same kind existed; for the Jesus with whom we are concerned is the author of a number of profound sayings. That these sayings were originated by nobody is obvious nonsense; that the most striking of them were originated by one and the same man is to my own mind clear. I cannot prove this, any more than I can prove that Shakespeare's Sonnets are by Shakespeare and not by a dozen unnamed contemporaries of his. I can only avow my conviction that the sonnets attributed to Shakespeare are for the most part coherent in substance, and similar in style; so are the sayings attributed to Jesus of Nazareth.

We are compelled to believe in the historical reality of the author of those sayings. The further question is whether we can place any credence in the accounts of his life. The ordinary methods of literary criticism quickly reveal that the three synoptic gospels have but one biographical narrative behind them, namely, the narrative of Mark. Everything therefore depends upon the credibility of the story given in Mark. In common with many others no more prejudiced than myself, I find the Marcan narrative intrinsically veracious. It is corrupt, interpolated, worked over, but there is a visible substrate of psychological truth; and this substrate is

of so unusual a kind that it is absolutely impossible to suppose that the naive author of the Marcan narrative invented it. '*Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'on invente*,' said Jean-Jacques Rousseau, of this story, – 'That is not the way men invent' – and his finding seems to me incontrovertible. One of the most ancient traditions of the Church declares that the gospel of Mark was based on the recollections of Peter. The internal evidence bears out this tradition. There is singularly little of Jesus' teaching recorded in the story of Mark; what is recorded is of cardinal importance – it concerns the mystery of the Kingdom of God and the nature of the parables. If a faithful follower of the living Jesus had been trying to recollect in old age those elements in his teaching on which Jesus himself laid most anxious emphasis, – elements which were already in danger of being overlaid and forgotten (perhaps by Pauline Christianity) – we should have, in my opinion, precisely what we find in the fourth chapter of Mark.

I am absolved from the task of arguing the case further. My conclusions are published in my *Life of Jesus*. The book contains a few indulgences of the imagination which I should not venture now. But I have very little to withdraw. Substantially, I believe the story of Jesus' life and the account of his teaching, given in that book, are true. I have no doubt that better lives of Jesus will be written, but I have equally little doubt that the conception of Jesus' evolution and the interpretation of Jesus' teaching on

which they will be based, will be fundamentally the same as my own. Again, I shall be probably accused of conceit and presumption in making this claim. But it seems better to take the risk, and put one's cards squarely on the table. My interpretations of Jesus and of Keats stand together; they are indeed, definitely complementary one to the other. If in any important and essential respect they are wrong, then I have to admit, frankly, that my thinking as a whole is also wrong in important and essential respects. If I have been seriously mistaken in these matters, then in all kinds of other matters, apparently remote from these, I am seriously mistaken too.

To write like this is, I know, bad manners in literature. But one thing, in my opinion, is more important than good manners in literature; and that is convictions. I have convictions, and I should like them to be understood. I find them difficult to expound and to communicate, as readers of this book will assuredly realize, if they have not realized it already. These convictions originate in certain experiences of my own, which I have already narrated. Those experiences were used as the clue to an understanding of the spiritual evolution of certain outstanding figures. The understanding of those figures was a definite stage on the path to further understanding. One of these figures was Jesus of Nazareth. My conception of him is one of the keystones in my constructive theory of life. If

that conception is invalidated in some essential respect, the theory of life is shaken.

For my present purpose I will reduce the story of Jesus' life, as I believe it happened, to its simplest terms and most certain elements, thus: –

A young carpenter of Galilee, in Palestine, whose native genius is apparent in the quality of his recorded words, believed in common with many others of his countrymen, that a great superhuman figure called Messiah would shortly appear to inaugurate a new mode of human existence, which he imagined as the direct reign of God upon the earth. The establishment of this new order would be terrible. The fierce judgment of God would be visited on those who had sinned against him.

This impending menace was preached, much as the Judgment Day is preached to-day by some primitive evangelists or was preached in Florence by Savonarola, by an impressive ascetic prophet named John, who had introduced baptism as a symbol of repentance and cleansing from sin. Jesus was half-attracted by this preaching, and sought John's baptism. At or about the time that he was baptized, he had a profound religious experience such that he believed that he had been in intimate communion with a loving God. All was well; there was a home for humanity. Inevitably and immediately his whole conception of the nature of the coming reign of God was changed. What men had to expect was not the fearful justice of a stern and implacable

being, but the warm love of a loving Father from whom, through ignorance, they had been estranged. With the conviction of the urgency of his message he became himself a prophet; but still more a teacher. He taught men how to prepare for the joyful consummation of the Reign of God, by achieving within themselves the same intimate experience of God which had come to him. Man's destiny and duty was to become 'a son of God.' What Jesus meant by this has to be gathered from his teaching as a whole; but one saying is crucial:

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that do you harm. That thus ye may be sons of your Father: for he makes his sun to rise upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.'

To be 'a son of God' was to accept, and to love, the actual universe that is; not to dream of another, but to love this one; not to resist the evil in it, but to love that also; to see the manifest wonder of an all-comprehending Creation.

To speak quite soberly, no more astonishing conception of God than this one has ever been put before mankind; for sheer wonder and audacity it has never been, and never will be surpassed. But it was inevitably fatal to the man who proclaimed it. At one stroke it abolished the Law and the Temple; the emphasis was set irrevocably on being, not doing. The acts of a son of God followed spontaneously from his being a son of God. If that teaching

were followed, and that conception of God really maintained itself, it was death to Judaism precisely as it would be death to Orthodoxy. The whole fabric of Jewish religion and Jewish civilization would have been shattered. What Jesus preached and taught was not merely blasphemy to their religion, but sedition to their theocracy. Naturally they resolved to destroy him; and they were perfectly right in so resolving. What Jesus preached and taught was not anarchy; on the contrary it was perfect order of a new kind: but what it would have actually produced was chaos. To be safe, that teaching needed a nation of disciples like himself.

What happened was that nobody understood his teaching, though probably there were many of his followers who admired and loved him as a man. But his teaching was inextricably blent with the belief in the coming of the Messiah to establish the mode of existence which was called 'The Reign of God.' Probably many who neither admired nor loved him followed him in expectation of that supernatural event, to insure themselves against disaster. The Messiah did not come; Jesus was forced to flee from the authorities. He became simply a fantastic and discredited prophet. The vast bulk of his followers forsook him. He, maintained by his intimate assurance that God endorsed all that he said and did, yet finding his hopes disappointed, his country closed to him and the coming of Messiah delayed, began to conceive that he might be destined

to be that Messiah. The moment the thought entered his mind and dwelt there, his way was plain, though terrible. His perplexities and doubts were solved. He, the living Jesus, could not be the Messiah: the Messiah was a superhuman figure. But he, the living Jesus, was bound to die, if he returned to his own country. If he did not return to it, he was condemned to silence, and silence, for his message, was worse than death. If he were destined to become Messiah, then his death had a mighty purpose. He could go forward and seek it, in the faith that in the moment of his extinction, he would be transfigured into the Judge of all the World. What his teaching could not accomplish, his power would cause to be.

The way of destiny was clear, and he took it, by a mighty effort of will. He returned to his country, and went up to Jerusalem. He was betrayed; he had expected it. He was condemned; he had expected it. He was crucified; he had expected it. But the sudden transfiguration and glorious epiphany which he had also expected was denied. The Father in whom he had trusted was as though he were not. He died in agony as an outcast and a criminal.

§ 4

That is the gist of the story, as I read it. To think about this story, to try to reach conclusions about it and to form some final judgment upon the man of

whom it tells is, in my experience, a singular instance of that kind of thinking which Goethe describes in a pregnant sentence. *Dass man gerade nur denkt, wenn man das, worüber man denkt, nicht ausdenken kann.* 'Then only are we really thinking, when it is impossible to think out the matter on which we are thinking.' This saying of Goethe gathers up three perceptions into which it may be expanded again.

First, that there is a kind of subjects which, by their own nature, cannot be thought out. Second, that to realize, in the act of thinking about these subjects that it is indeed their nature that they cannot be thought out, is itself the most exact and positive kind of thinking concerning them. And, finally, that these subjects are precisely those upon which it is imperative to think often and to think deeply.

Expanded thus into its elements, Goethe's observation may appear to be simply a profession of agnosticism. But agnosticism is only a word: the experiences which can be hidden, indeed smothered, beneath it are as rich and various as the word seems poor and barren. Agnosticism sounds like a mere negation. There is nothing negative in Goethe's realization. As we can delight in the rich assurance of Falstaff's voice when he gave Mrs. Quickly the comfort that 'Glasses is the only drinking,' so, in a different sphere, a kindred satisfaction is to be derived from Goethe's conviction *Dass mann gerade*

nur denkt – that 'This is the only thinking.' It is no grudging submission to an incapacity: rather a *gay scavoir*.

Consider the nature and quality of our reactions to the story that has been briefly told. The story is not so simple as it looks, nor is our attitude towards it so simple as some may think it ought to be. We discover in our minds, as revealed by our reactions to this subject, disparate and seemingly discordant elements. There is an element in us – call it the Mephistopheles: the spirit in us which denies – which declares that it was folly in Jesus to go to the Cross for an illusion. If he only had the power to analyse his crucial religious experience, and to separate out from it that colour and quality which came from his own great desire; if he could only have withstood his own passion to find a God in his experience, and to invest that God with his own nature, the fearful waste of an exquisite humanity would have been spared. Folly, says Mephistopheles; but a noble folly, says Faust.

And beyond these yet other spirits in ourselves are awakened. One of them declares, with a quiet but certain voice, that in this story is manifest an extraordinary beauty, and that this beauty is of the same kind as the beauty of great tragedy; but with two fearful differences: that this tragedy was not invented or imagined; and that this man was destroyed not by one of those common human failings which beset the tragic hero, but by his own

human magnificence. *Sunt lacrimae rerum*: not his folly, but the nature of things destroyed him.

And yet another says: Folly! But this folly of his was the supreme wisdom. His great act in seeking death was not only beautiful, but wise. Must it not have been wise, when without it the sublime beauty which you discern could never have been revealed? He was one of those, and the greatest of them, who burn themselves out in the service of some mysterious purpose which we glimpse only through them. They are like rare filaments of humanity: when the strange current of destiny passes through them, they glow in a moment of pure incandescence which casts a sudden light upon the nature of things.

Not that Jesus knew his act, as we know it now, for beautiful and wise and sovereign; for him it was, and could have been, only inevitable. There was no other thing for him to do. Not to go forward was to deny his knowledge, and himself. And we will not take away from the purity of his sublime sense of inevitability, by calling it his knowledge of his Father's will. It was the sense: This must be done through me, the mysterious life of things is gathered up in me; I suffer the birth-pangs of a universe to be.

And yet again, taking the after-history into our view, we must consider the story also thus: –

He made a mistake, and he failed, in disaster. The nature of his mistake is evident. He was involved, through no fault of his own, in the belief

of his generation in the coming of a Messiah. Probably that belief was as natural and inevitable for men of his place and time as was the belief that the sun moved round the earth for the men of four hundred years ago. None the less it was illusion, and the price he paid for entertaining it was disillusion and death.

Simple enough: but wait. It is true that he believed in the coming of Messiah, and Messiah did not come. Then, by an inexorable compulsion, he believed that he himself would become Messiah, and he did not. And yet, in a sense, he did. For centuries the only meaning the word Messiah had for Europe was Jesus the Redeemer. That was not how he had dreamed he would be Messiah; it was utterly different from his dream. Was it less great, or greater than his dream? It is hard to compare them; but, no doubt, less great by far. Still, it was very great. He has been the one hope of successive millions of men. Even to-day, thousands of little children, for whom he greatly cared, feel safe at nights because he stands between them and a fearful God.

To represent that after-destiny as the fulfilment of his dream that he would be Messiah would be a base equivocation. But, remembering that after-destiny, is it possible to say he failed? Is it not even possible still that he might succeed, in a sense far nearer to his dream? For in his dream, to become Messiah was only the means to the end of his heart's desire – to make real the kingdom of God. Is that, as he meant

it, really inconceivable? And if it is not inconceivable, how shall we say he failed?

Here are many different thoughts on this single story. No doubt there are many more, and we shall try to think them. But the absolute condition of the kind of thinking upon which we are embarked is that the subject of our thinking belongs wholly to the natural order. We suffer no taint of the supernatural to corrupt our contemplation, no magic or miracle to impoverish the richness of our theme.

§ 5

The story is strange, simple, coherent, inevitable and beautiful on one sole condition: that the conception of God which Jesus preached, taught, and obeyed was not the mere delusion of a visionary. If that was madness, then his life was a madness; and we who imagine we discern a sublime beauty in it, are also mad.

Now there are some who believe that it is foolish to have a conception of God at all. They may be wise, but we must dismiss them as fools. It is the act of a fool, we must believe, to reckon as fools all the wise men who have had a conception of God, and believed in it.

It may be true that it is foolish, now in this year of grace, 1929, to have a conception of God and to believe in it. That is the question we have ultimately

to decide. But not yet. It was assuredly not foolish nineteen hundred years ago in Galilee to believe in God.

Had Jesus believed in the same God as his countrymen, all would have been well. He would have lived, and died, and been forgotten. He believed in a God of a totally different kind; and he believed that it was absolutely necessary to tell his countrymen about the God in whom he believed. That necessity brought him to his death.

Whatever else we may think about the God in whom Jesus believed we must admit that he was a very wonderful God. If he really existed, then it manifestly was the duty of Jesus to devote his life to spreading the knowledge of that God among men. Nor is it strange that he found it hard to convince men of the truth of his God. His God was terribly hard to believe in: so hard that men never believed in him, either during Jesus' life, or after his death. Not even to-day, or in any part of the Christian Church, do men believe in the God in whom Jesus believed. They believe in Jesus instead, which is much easier. The God of Jesus is denied by experience, as Jesus found.

How came he then to believe in such a God, so passionately, and on the whole so steadily? His life is far away, and we may exaggerate the steadiness of his belief. Indeed, the traces of his doubts have not been wholly removed from his story. With the wonder of his own conviction fresh upon him, he

seems to have doubted; and when at last he found that the loving Father was to be a bitter father indeed to his most loving son, he doubted again. But in all his extremities before the great last, some ultimate conviction sustained him. He was convinced that he had discovered the true God.

How came he to be convinced of this? There was only one possible way. He had had what seemed to him, and never ceased to seem to him, direct experience of his God. He had the mystical experience.

Only those who have had, or can imagine (if such imagination be really possible) the mystical experience, can really understand the life of Jesus. It alone affords the key to his strange and simple teaching, and his strange and simple certainty. It alone could give that unshakable certainty which he possessed. The difficulty for the man who has been visited by the mystical experience is not to believe, but to doubt. The blissful sense of home-coming, the sudden welcome into what seems the heart of things, the consciousness of complete translation into a being one's own yet not one's own – these things are more actual than any joy or any pain can ever be.

If we would understand the story of Jesus' life in the natural order, we must admit the mystical experience. We must admit, not its truth, but its vehemence and uniqueness. We may admit so much, and yet declare that the mystical experience is illusion. But what grounds are there for declaring

that it is illusion? We may find fault with every formulation of the mystical certainty; but so do the mystics themselves. For the most part their formulations are derived from their previous beliefs. Any mystic may misinterpret his experience; but no misinterpretation can abolish it.

How the mystical experience can be truly interpreted does not concern us yet. What is required is simply that it shall be admitted that it is a unique and crucial experience, not to be dismissed as a fanatical delusion. In its bare essentials it is an immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity. If the all-pervading Unity is called God, then it follows necessarily that the experiencing subject knows himself as consubstantial with God.

The moment so much is admitted, it becomes difficult to decide at what point we can say that Jesus misinterpreted the mystical experience which certainly befell him. 'I and my Father are one' was, to him, a simple statement of experienced fact. He asserted his unity with God. That he did not assert this as a peculiar relation between his sole self and God, as Orthodox Christianity maintains, is evident from the whole of his teaching. Jesus taught that any man could enter into precisely the same relation with God as Jesus himself, and every man should enter it. This was indeed, the whole duty of man. Once he entered into this relation with God, he knew that the whole world was a harmony ordained and created by God. He did not resist evil; his

delight was to make himself utterly obedient to the God-created plan. In a word, Jesus by his teaching sought to change nothing but the hearts and minds of men. If they could know what he knew, and see what he saw, all was well.

To be a son of God was thus, as it were, to enter into the scheme of things: to be able to look upon it, like God himself, and see that it was good. To do the will of the Father was to become a conscious participant in God's plan. Actually, it meant to be a son of God and to do whatever, in the full living consciousness of the reality of that relation to God, you were impelled to do. The will of the Father declared itself at the point where absolute freedom and absolute obedience were one.

Such were the bare essentials of Jesus' conviction and his teaching. No one who understands them will ever feel that any part of this expression of the mystical faith was mistaken. On the contrary, if he understands, he will feel that no more startlingly beautiful promulgation of the mystical certainty will ever be made. The mystical certainty itself may be mistaken; but not Jesus' expression of it.

But his Father failed him at the last. Jesus died, utterly disappointed. That is true. But something quite other than his mystical certainty had intervened – his belief in the coming of Messiah. That belief was completely alien to his mystical certainty. Indeed, his mystical certainty should have abolished, and probably in some degree did abolish his belief in

the coming of Messiah. The most Messiah could be was the means by which the certainty and the vision of Jesus would be granted to all men. Almost certainly Jesus reconciled his own certainty with his previous belief in Messiah, by the simple and natural assumption that he was preparing the way for the establishment by the Messiah of the Kingdom of God. He was the leader of those who entered it 'by violence'; they realized it here and now.

But there came a moment when Jesus knew that his teaching of God had failed. The authorities were resolved to destroy him; the thousands who had followed became tens. He could flee the country, as he did. But in an alien country how could he teach? He could teach only Jews; by returning to teach them, he would die. Teach God he must; then die he must. The line of destiny was plain to him. Yet why should he die? Was this his Father's will? Then came flooding his mind the sublime imagination that he himself was to be Messiah. His destiny of death would be his victory.

There, indeed, he was mistaken. He was not Messiah: there was no Messiah. But if his mind was mistaken, his soul was not. He had done his Father's will, in precisely the sense that he had taught it should be done. He had followed his destiny, unflinching, to the end; he had achieved his soul, and let it lead him. He had not resisted evil, and evil slew him.

More: his destiny of death was his victory. A life,

harmonious, complete, and beautiful, even in death, had been lived: 'one entire and perfect chrysolite.' The reason of this perfection is plain: this life was lived in obedience to a certainty. Further – and here is the essential – the life, which ended in the desolation of its conscious purposes, reveals to contemplation precisely that certainty in obedience to which it was lived. He had lived by the conviction of a harmony in all things, and a harmony in all things is what his life reveals.

That is, I believe, the essential of the Christian revelation when it is purified of superstition; and it is a very great revelation indeed. The incessant intuition of this strange and simple perfection through the ages is the spiritual truth that lies behind the belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is from the energy of soul that has been liberated in successive generations of men by this intuition that the amazing vitality of the Christian tradition proceeds.

What shall we conclude from this? For my own part, I can conclude only one thing. The certainty which he had, and by which he lived, was in some profound sense true. He had indeed discovered a secret of infinite importance to men – a secret by obeying which man's life is made wholly significant.

I cannot rid myself of that conviction. But, at the same time, I am equally convinced that in the formulation of his certainty he was mistaken. By that I do not mean that his belief in the loving

Fatherhood of his God was mistaken. He had only the religious forms of his place and time in which to express his certainty. That certainty was therefore bound to be expressed in terms of a relation between man and God, because God was the ultimate reality in the mind and heart of every Jew. We have simply to understand what Jesus meant by declaring that the relation between man and God was the relation between son and Father; and when we understand its meaning it is not possible to deny its truth.

But we can only understand it fully by remembering that Jesus was deserted and disillusioned at the last. The love of the Father is not a human love. Jesus made it too human. The 'love' of God that was manifest in that dying and broken man, is too fearful and sublime a thing to bear that name. What is manifest is an ineffable perfection of human life, an evidence of that ultimate harmony in which Jesus had believed. If we call it an ultimate harmony, not only is the fearful contradiction between the apparent belief of Jesus and his personal destiny removed, but we pierce through the apparent belief of Jesus to its reality. There is a great and terrible contradiction between what men imagine by the love of a loving God and the terror of Jesus' destiny; but there is no contradiction whatever between it and Jesus' intuition of the nature of the God when he declared:

'Love your enemies, and pray for them that do you harm; that thus ye may be sons of your Father:

for he makes his sun to rise upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust.'

In that intuition of the nature of God there is room for the evil which Jesus suffered unresisting and the dereliction which he endured.

But, it may be said, the condition of the manifestation of this truth in the life and death of Jesus was illusion. He believed that he would be transfigured and become Messiah. The answer is that there are illusions and illusions. The illusion of the great man is not as the illusion of the little one. What Jesus had to find was the courage to follow his destiny. He had his certainty, and it was true. He believed at first that all men would receive it, but they could not. The moment came when he was utterly alone with his certainty. To be alone with a certainty is a fearful thing. Doubtless there were moments, many moments, when he doubted his own sanity. The choice was clear before him: either to deny his own certainty and live, or to hold to it and die. It was as plain as day that if he believed in his certainty he must proclaim it, and that if he proclaimed it, he must die. A man in such a case, if he cannot recant his truth, as Jesus could not, must do one thing alone. He must find a justification for his death. No man, not even the greatest, in such extremity, can go forward with open eyes to his own annihilation. He must believe that death will be his victory; he must believe that there is a Plan, and that he knows it.

The belief in the Messiah gave Jesus the means of believing in the purpose, as he knew the necessity, of his own inevitable death. We have become so accustomed to the Christian thought of Jesus as Messiah, that it is hard for us to realize the sheer audacity of his conception. That a man should become Messiah by suffering and death was almost an unthinkable thought for a Jew like Jesus. Precisely because it is an unthinkable thought for the Jew, the Jews alone, in Western history, have been adamant against the Christian revelation. This unthinkable thought came to Jesus: 'to the Jews madness,' to him who also was a Jew and not a Christian, also madness. But he had learned in bitterness that he had been singled out by God to receive a revelation of his nature. Since his very sanity was mad (even to his mother and brothers) why should not his madness be sane?

From his belief that he would become Messiah, he gained the courage of his destiny. That was the all-important thing. To be able to obey his certainty to the last, to set his expectation of triumph at the ultimate point where no effort of soul or body could any more avail, – that was what he needed. That he found the courage in an illusion is utterly indifferent; that he found the courage is all in all. He was a man who was required to die for a great discovery: who knew, in his depths, deeper than mind or heart, that if he did not die for his discovery his discovery would have been lost – it would never

have been found. For his real discovery was not the nature of God, but of himself.

§ 6

Jesus' discovery was not of the nature of God, but of himself. That seems to me no paradox, but the simple truth. He was a new kind of man, literally, scientifically; a new species of the genus *homo*. If that sounds extravagant to the scientific mind, I must reply that to dismiss such a claim *a priori* is utterly unscientific. If the belief in the evolutionary hypothesis has a real and positive meaning, and is not merely a convenient excuse for not believing, or not investigating, certain other things, then the emergence, in a single individual, of a new species of the genus *homo*, is a happening of the kind that ought to be expected. And, when it is reported, it ought instantly to be investigated; and to be investigated scientifically, that is to say, in an attitude of mind completely devoid of preconception concerning the nature of the happening that is to be investigated.

I am aware of myself as engaged in nothing but a truly scientific attempt to investigate the fact of the man Jesus. It may be said, and probably it will be said, that I have come to it with preconceptions of my own, in that I have declared that nothing in the fact of the man Jesus can belong to the category of the supernatural. In that declaration, I have simply

declared a necessity of my own mind. To introduce, or to be prepared to introduce, the category of the supernatural into my thinking, would be mental and spiritual suicide. A world which at a certain point, no matter how far distant in time, ceased for a period to belong to the natural order, is no world for me, a man of the twentieth century, to contemplate or live in: it would be a cheap and vulgar world, from which it would be my duty as a man to escape immediately.

But when, in their just hatred and contempt for a world in which the natural order has been at any time capriciously replaced by the supernatural, men refuse to give their attention to those events in the natural order which are the substance and foundation of supernatural beliefs, they appear to me to place themselves on precisely the same level as those believers in the supernatural whom they condemn. Both alike refuse to know.

That it is difficult to investigate the fact of the man Jesus is manifest. The ordinary apparatus of the man of science will not serve at all. The emergence in Jesus of a new species of the genus *homo* is a perfectly possible scientific fact; to deny it as possibility would be mere impertinence. But to admit it as possibility would involve the immediate confession that science, as we know it, is completely lacking in the technique, and even in the hypotheses, necessary for the investigation of such a fact. A new species of the genus *homo*, for the

ordinary biologist, would mean a man with an extra eye, or a rudimentary fin where his tail should be. The newness must in short be physical, or science cannot recognize it. That is true enough. But scientists have a way of talking as though Science were like Queen Victoria; they seem to imagine that what Science 'cannot recognize' must necessarily cease to exist. Not having the entrée, it is somehow unreal. The fact that Science 'cannot recognize' certain things simply means that Science is at present shortsighted.

Science, it is true, cannot recognize any order but the natural. By recognizing a supernatural order, it would cease to be Science. But, equally, by refusing to recognize any part of the natural order, it will cease to be Truth.

We have contended and done our best to show that the life and death of Jesus was a real happening in the natural order. This life, regarded as belonging wholly to the natural order, revealed an extraordinary and deeply satisfying coherence, of a kind which we might describe as organic. But since we must suppose that, for the science of Biology, all human lives possess organic coherence, it is obviously insufficient to describe the coherence which we discern in the life of Jesus as merely organic. It is organic on a higher level than the pure biological. We will call this level the metabiological, and say that the life of Jesus manifests not merely the biological coherence necessary to the lives of all men,

but a metabiological coherence also, which is exceedingly rare and striking.

This metabiological coherence in the life and death of Jesus reveals itself to simple contemplation as an extraordinary beauty and completeness. It is there, just as potent, just as enduring, when Jesus is regarded wholly as natural phenomenon, as when he is regarded as supernatural phenomenon. It is, to speak the exact truth, far more potent and enduring when he is regarded as natural phenomenon than when he is regarded as supernatural phenomenon. In the latter case his coherence and beauty are but fragmentary; they appear only to disappear in the haze of 'divinity.' The miraculous, wherever it is imposed upon this phenomenon, destroys the miracle of it.

But there is one condition absolutely necessary to our regarding Jesus as a coherent and beautiful natural phenomenon. It is that we must regard the mystical experience, not necessarily as valid, but as real and decisive – as a motive of human life, let us say, as natural as passionate love, and far more potent. Unless we admit the mystical experience as a valid and mighty and noble human motive, there is no coherence to be found in the life of Jesus as a natural phenomenon. He becomes, inevitably, a deluded fanatic. That conclusion, to me, is no less impossible and infinitely more repulsive than the conclusion that he is 'divine.' The origin of what we have called the metabiological coherence of

Jesus, regarded as natural phenomenon, lies in his unwavering obedience to the mystical certainty of an all-pervading unity.

Now, in objection to this conclusion, it may be maintained that we have merely discovered in the fact of Jesus what we ourselves put there. We have begun by accepting as reality in the fact of Jesus only what appears to us to possess coherence; no wonder, then, that we find coherence in the fact. It is difficult to reply to such an argument. We can do little more than insist that our sole conscious purpose was to exclude from the fact of Jesus all elements that belong to the category of the supernatural. On what remained we made no conscious attempt to impose coherence. Further, it seems to us completely beyond our capacity, conscious or unconscious, to have invented or imposed such an order as we claim to have discovered. If we did, we possess genius of a kind which neither we, nor others, have suspected in us.

If, on the other hand, the fact of Jesus is as we have described it, we have immediately a satisfactory explanation of a phenomenon which badly needs an explanation: namely, that for the best part of two thousand years, many of the noblest minds of Europe have been fascinated by the fact of Jesus. Either they have been able, with no sense of derogation, to worship him as a God, or they have venerated him as a man. No figure in Western history has exercised such compulsive fascination, nor for so

long, upon the hearts and minds of men. If in him emerged, as we have contended, a new and more wonderful species of the genus *homo*, this continuous worship and veneration is simply what we should expect him to receive, and what he ought to have received.

The differentiating characteristic of this new man, as we regard him, lies first in his apprehension in immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity, and, second, and more importantly, in the perfection of his obedience to it. The instant and legitimate objections to such a description are two. It may be objected, first, that the immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity is mere delusion. To that objection we will endeavour to reply subsequently, when we will attempt to press our analysis of the mystical experience home to ultimates. For the present we content ourselves with remarking that, even if the immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity should prove to be an illusion, the significant fact would still remain that a life lived in unflinching obedience to this illusory certainty manifested a new, and hitherto unknown, kind of coherence.

The second, and we think more serious objection, is that the conception of 'obedience to an all-pervading Unity' is meaningless to the intelligence. The consideration of that objection also must be postponed to the moment when we attempt to analyse the mystical experience more rigorously. We believe that it will then appear that 'obedience

to an all-pervading unity' has a real and definite meaning, and that its obscurity is but temporary, and due to the fact that the phrase is a transitional term in a process of translating the religious concept 'obedience to the will of God' from the religious into the psychological and biological category.

One further objection should perhaps be anticipated before we pass on to the analysis of the mystical experience which is now urgently required. It may be urged against our contention that Jesus was a member of a new species of the genus *homo*, that it may indeed be so, but we have chosen for our example a case which it is singularly difficult to investigate. The mixture of fact and legend, of natural and supernatural, in the case of Jesus is so inextricable that no genuinely scientific conclusion can be based upon it. In any attempt to separate fact from legend, and the natural from the supernatural in the life of Jesus, the subjective bias of the investigator inevitably has free rein, so that it would be impossible for dispassionate investigators to reach any preliminary agreement on the essential question: What *are* the facts to be investigated? If Jesus is the unique example of the new species of the genus *homo*, then our theory may be (at the best) stimulating to the imagination; but the facts are so remote and so disputable that we cannot, without unwarrantable self-delusion, suppose that it will be convincing to the intelligence.

To this we reply, categorically, that Jesus is not

the unique example of the new man. One very clear and relatively modern example is the English poet, John Keats. The facts of the biography of Keats cannot be disputed. In his life, which was consummated in an agony scarcely more endurable to contemplate than that of Jesus himself, the same kind of metabiological coherence is manifest. In his life, moreover, we find the same mystical certainty attained at the crucial moment in his existence: the apprehension of an all-pervading unity immediately preceded his greatest and most mysterious achievement, and obedience to that certainty determined his life to the end. The facts of Keats's life have been investigated in my book, *Keats and Shakespeare;* and the results reached in it have not been seriously impugned.

Nor have I any doubt that there have been many other examples of the new man, though they are not so familiar to me. I find very evident traces of the same kind of development in Spinoza, in Goethe, in Shakespeare, in Blake, and in some of the great Christian mystics. It is not possible for one man to investigate them all. I am engaged in trying to put forward a hypothesis of human evolution. If it commends itself to others, they can do their share of the investigation that is necessary.

2

MYSTICISM AND AFTER

§ 1

We claim to have found the origin of the metabiological coherence that is manifest in the life of Jesus in the mystical experience with which his non-legendary biography begins, and in the unwavering obedience with which he followed it. We have now to investigate the mystical experience. The question we seek finally to answer is whether the mystical experience is illusion or truth.

That the mystical experience is liable to induce illusion we imagine no one who has studied it at all would deny. As we have seen, at the very moment it is formulated in terms of the relation between God and man the possibility of illusion is present. But there is a great difference between the possible degree of illusion in the subject of the experience himself, and the possible degree of illusion in those who, lacking the first-hand experience, try to understand the accounts of it which are given by those who have been subjected to it. The subject of the mystical experience is always aware that, fundamentally, his experience is unformulable; he is conscious that his attempts to formulate and to communicate it in religious or poetical terms are always in some sense metaphorical. Even the

definitely religious mystic who comes to the experience with a conviction of the real existence of God is acutely aware that his experience has done something greater indeed, but something essentially other, than to confirm his previous conviction of the existence of God. He is conscious that even his religious concepts are inadequate to convey the nature of his experience.

The situation is such that we must be wary of ascribing illusion even to those who formulate their experience in religious terms which are unacceptable to our intelligence. The mystic's account of his experience has to be understood from within. He is dealing in metaphors. To take those metaphors literally, and to saddle the mystic with the beliefs which appear to be contained in them when they are literally understood, is to deceive oneself considerably concerning the actual amount of illusion with which the mystic himself was afflicted. Sometimes, no doubt, he takes his own metaphors literally; but this is difficult to determine. It would, to take our capital instance, pass the wit of man to decide whether, and how far, and at what point in his life, Jesus himself took his metaphors literally. That other people, millions of other people, have taken his metaphors for facts, is irrelevant.

The truth is that those who have been subjected to the mystical experience find it very easy to read the language of the great mystics before them, even when the religious concepts used by the mystics in

formulating the experience are completely alien to their own habit of mind. Further, the system of metaphors in which the concept of God is predominant is extremely natural to the subject of mystical experience. In general, the language of religion is the only one which seems appropriate; and this is to be expected, seeing that the language of religion has been, for the most part, fashioned by continuous attempts to explicate the mystical experience. Further, it is natural and almost inevitable, even for those subjects of the mystical experience who are as remote as any man can be from religious tradition and religious belief, to have recourse to the concept of God. No one, for example, could well have been more indifferent to the Christian religious tradition than John Keats; yet immediately after his decisive mystical experience, we find him declaring the nature of God with an authority which would suggest that it was the object of his familiar contemplation. And, if I may dare to quote my own experience, God, in the familiar sense of the word, had been no concern of mine for nearly twenty years; the word was meaningless to me. But, after my experience, I was afflicted with an irresistible impulse to declare to all and sundry that God veritably existed, and that I knew it. For the first time in my life the word God possessed a real, as opposed to a theoretical, meaning.

The idiom of religion is natural to the mystical experience. That is not to say that it is necessary to

it. But it is to say that those who are unable to penetrate the language of religion will understand singularly little concerning the nature of the mystical experience. Those to whom the idiom of high theology is so much fantastic nonsense will never be able to investigate the mystical experience. The facts are concealed from them as effectually as if they were hidden in a language of which neither grammar nor dictionary existed. That is the reason why the so-called scientific investigations of the mystical experience are so painfully puerile. They are necessarily based on the crude pathological experiences of the victims of trance and dementia, or if by accident upon a genuine mystical experience, upon the experience of a person who, lacking the natural religious language, is unable really to describe the experience at all. Even so fine, so sympathetic, and so unbiassed an investigator as the late William James displays what must appear a schoolboy crudity to those really acquainted with the utterances of the great religious mystics. In this peculiar subject, first-hand experience is necessary, if the facts are to be seen at all. 'To him that hath, it shall be given; and from him that hath not, it shall be taken away even that which he hath.' On consideration, it is not surprising that this hard saying of Jesus should apply to the would-be investigators of the mystical experience. After all, it was of the mystical experience that it was originally spoken.

Whether it is possible for one who has had the

necessary first-hand experience of it, ever to become sufficiently detached from it, or sufficiently immune from its influence, to satisfy the essential demands of scientific investigation, I can hardly presume to say. I believe that I am more detached from my experience than any subject of it with whom I am familiar; but I am constrained to recognize that the influence of the mystical experience is deep, and in a sense ineradicable. It causes a deep and permanent change in one's mental dispositions. One becomes *convinced* of something, in a way in which one has never been convinced of anything, in heaven or earth, before, unless perhaps it be of the mere fact of one's own existence. What it is one becomes convinced of, – to determine that, is the question to which we seek an answer here. The labour of 'disintoxication,' which, as Mr. Santayana says, and I believe, is the true 'note' of the spiritual life, is long and painful. I have been unremittingly engaged upon it now for more than six years. But it may be that the toxic influence is ultimately ineradicable from my system. Whether that is so, and if it is so, whether the influence is good or bad, my readers must decide. The last toxic grain, in short, may be either the element of invincible illusion, or the atom of irreducible truth, which vitiates or redeems this writing. I have often, and sometimes bitterly, wondered whether the mystical experience was a curse or a blessing. I do not even now decide; nor is my quotation meant to imply a decision.

Facilis descensus Averno;
Sed revocare gradum superasque evadere ad auras:
Hoc opus, hic labor est.

For me the descent was far from easy, and it may well have been an ascension. *Sed revocare gradum . . . hoc opus, hic labor est.*

§ 2

It appears to me evident that the mystical experience is a continually recurrent natural phenomenon, and that its essential conditions and characteristics, as distinct from the varieties of idiom in which they are expressed, are constant. Of these essential conditions and characteristics I will attempt a brief, and altogether provisional, description. The description will be, I hope, accurate; it is provisional in the sense that it will be couched in language which, though familiar, is vague. It will be my aim, later in this book, to replace this vague and familiar language by something more exact.

The mystical experience supervenes upon a state of complete spiritual exhaustion. This condition of spiritual exhaustion is produced in the subject by a long-standing and continually increasing psychological tension which we may describe as discord between the Heart and the Mind. The object concerning which the Heart and Mind are in discord is the moral nature of the Universe. The conclusions of the Mind concerning the moral nature of the

Universe are such that they afford no satisfaction to the Heart. In terms of the religious consciousness (that is to say, the consciousness for which a conviction of the existence of God is natural) this discord between Mind and Heart appears as a consuming desire of the Heart 'to know God,' which is absolutely disappointed by the Mind's deliverance that the world manifests no sign of the existence even of a just, far less of a loving, God.

To leave the religious idiom again, the Heart craves for the evidence of a moral order in the world, and the Mind can discover no signs of it. The Mind, for its own part, has its own desire to discover an order in the world. The order that the Mind is capable of discovering varies with the advance of human knowledge. But the characteristic of any order in the world that Mind alone can discover is that it is morally indifferent. The order of Science is typical; it bases its system of law on mechanistic and determinist principles. These totally exclude the possibility of such an order satisfying the demand of the Heart. That demand, in its simplest terms, is that the moral quality of the individual shall not be indifferent to the Universe. The Mind, seeking solely to make a true report of the facts, declares that there is no evidence that the moral quality of the individual is regarded in whatever order it can discern.

In certain natures this conflict between the Heart and the Mind, once felt and recognized, becomes

extreme and intolerable. When the nature is specifically religious, the desperate cry is heard that God is hidden and will not reveal himself. In a nature which has rejected the concepts and language of religion, the cry, equally desperate, is that the Universe is without soul and purpose. This despair can only reach absolute extremity in natures which take the conclusions of the Mind, and the desires of the Heart, with a deep seriousness. Both are painfully, even agonizingly, real: it is impossible for such a nature to forget the Mind's conclusions by indulging the Heart's desires: which is the condition of the majority of 'religious' people. It is equally impossible to smother the desires of the Heart, even in the most resolute acceptance of the Mind's conclusions: which is what many scientific agnostics claim to do. For the nature in which this inward conflict is destined to reach the necessary condition of extremity, the deliverances of Heart and Mind are equally 'real,' so that the conclusions of the Mind are indeed an icy and unshifting burden upon the Heart, and the desires of the Heart recognized as infinitely precious by the Mind, though doomed to death. Neither can suppress the other.

Gradually, a condition of profound and internecine inward division is reached. The moral or spiritual life of the individual is paralysed by his intellectual conviction of its utter irrelevance. A typical circumstance to exacerbate this inward division is to be condemned, as Keats was con-

demned, to watch a dearly loved being slowly dying, and to be conscious of one's own impotence to alleviate the suffering, or to prevent the issue. Then the problem of evil and pain is nakedly upon a man, not as a matter for abstract speculation, but as an inward poison which he must conquer or he will die. He cannot conquer it. The poison spreads and corrupts his vitals. His emotional life becomes at once extraordinarily active and completely sterile. Keats, who 'had proved it upon his pulses,' describes the condition well.

Thou art a dreaming thing,
A fever of thyself: think of the earth;
What bliss, even in hope, is there for thee?
What haven? Every creature hath its home,
Every sole man hath days of joy and pain,
Whether his labours be sublime or low –
The pain alone, the joy alone, distinct:
Only the dreamer venoms all his days,
Bearing more woes than all his sins deserve.

The sole visible release from this condition of feverish sterility is instinctive anarchy – a relapse into brute existence – but the nature of the man is such that such a relapse is impossible. The fevered brooding becomes more intense, more unbearable; and with this intense and self-stultifying activity of emotion and thought comes an ever-increasing consciousness of isolation. He is being set apart, by

the mere nature of this incessant inward activity, not merely from the indifferent universe, but even from humankind.

This sterility and isolation, this emotional and mental activity and frustration, continue, increasing, until at last an absolute spiritual inanition is reached. There appears to be no more emotion and no more thought: the capacity for both is suddenly exhausted. The flow of life, save on the reflex and animal level, is utterly blocked. The religious mystics have distinct names for this final condition.

Then comes the explosion. There is a sudden and unique experience of the kind which I have attempted to describe in the first section of this book. It is an immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity.

§ 3

The problem is to decide what significance is to be attached to this experience. The experience itself is psychologically immediate. Is it also ontologically ultimate? Is it indeed, as it invariably is felt to be, a supra-intellectual revelation of truth?

We need not attempt to describe the indescribable emotional warmth of the experience, the blessed and ineffable felicity of being taken to the bosom of all things, or of God. It is enough to say that no one who has ever experienced it would dare to say that Jesus' amazing conception of God was *wrong*. He could only say that this conception of God was an

experience expressed in a metaphor, and a metaphor which he understands. Our business now is to try to keep our heads about an experience of which even the years' old memory is strangely disturbing.

Critics who are sceptical concerning the mystical experience generally point out, with a certain discreet jubilation, the similarity which undoubtedly exists between it and the abnormal condition of consciousness frequently experienced by patients under an anæsthetic. The comparison is often resented as trivial, irrelevant and degrading, by those who attach significance to the mystical experience; it is, nevertheless, a perfectly legitimate and even a salutary comparison, provided it be fairly made. By a stroke of good fortune, while I was engaged in writing this book, I underwent the anæsthetic experience, which was previously unknown to me.

My conclusion is that, so far as I was able to tell, the experiences are indistinguishable. The immediate awareness of an all-pervading Unity was of the same kind. And yet the experiences are utterly different. That is not a flimsy or disingenuous paradox.

For the true essential of the mystical experience lies in its relation on the one hand to the psychological condition which precedes it, and on the other hand, to the psychological condition which follows it. These preceding and subsequent conditions, with the pure experience between and uniting them,

form one continuous organic process. To isolate the pure experience and to declare that it alone constitutes the mystical experience is the act of sheer ignorance. The mystical experience is a term in a continuous process; it is not merely the pure experience, but also the condition of consciousness to which it puts an end and the condition of consciousness which it begins.

To that we shall return immediately. But with that all-important reservation, I freely and gladly admit, nay I insist emphatically, that to me the element of pure experience in both the mystical and anæsthetic experiences is indistinguishable. I feel no difficulty whatever in believing that, as pure experience, they are the same.

But the anæsthetic experience is imposed, and irrelevant to the life in which it occurs; the mystical experience is self-originated, and relevant. It is obvious that it is merely foolish to attempt to explain the mystical by the anæsthetic experience; one might, as reasonably, explain the anæsthetic by the mystical experience. To understand the mystical experience, we must consider the psychological, or spiritual condition, which precedes it and to which it wholly puts an end.

The preceding condition, which we have described generally in non-religious terms, is a condition of twofold division. The subject is divided inwardly, by the incessant opposition of Heart and Mind, neither of which can overpower or nullify the

other. He is also divided, outwardly, from the world of his experience; he feels and knows himself to be completely isolated in an indifferent or hostile Universe. These two divisions, the inward and the outward, are intimately connected. The outward division is the first cause of the inward division; and as the inward division reaches extremity, the outward division becomes continually more acute: strange thoughts, emotions and experiences still further isolate the man from even that portion of the Universe with which some heart-satisfying relation existed – namely, humankind.

It is clear that the only means by which this twofold division can be overcome is by a radical alteration in the quality of the Universe as known by the Mind. The Universe known by the Mind must be, or become, such that the Heart can be satisfied with it. But to know such a Universe is impossible for the Mind. If it had been possible, the condition of twofold division would never have arisen.

Suddenly, there is a solution of the insoluble. There is created within the subject a new kind of consciousness, in which emotion and thought, previously in absolute opposition, become one and indistinguishable. The subject experiences a new unity, in which the previously separated Heart and Mind are one. And this unity is not distinct from the Universe, but an inseparable part of it. At one and the same moment, the subject experiences himself as a unity, and this unity of himself as part of an

all-pervading Unity. To correspond with the twofold division, there is a twofold integration. In the language of religious mysticism the unity of the subject is the Soul; and the all-pervading Unity of which the subject-unity experiences itself as a part, is God. Hence the conviction, fundamental to all true religious mysticism, of the consubstantiality of the Soul and God.

This experience, though extraordinary and unhoped-for, is absolutely relevant to the long psychological and spiritual process that has gone before. It arises directly out of that process, and cannot be understood apart from it. A twofold integration supervenes upon the twofold division. There is an immense afflux of energy, as though the psychic stream which had been dammed back by the inward division, could suddenly flow free again with an immense accumulation of unused strength. For some time after the experience the very faculties of sense appear to be miraculously renewed. The subject is aware of himself as a vehicle of Life once more. His psychic organization is permanently changed; for, even when the sense of sheer beatitude has passed away, he is permanently enriched, or beset, with two profound convictions which he is unable, either by the solvent of further experience or the deliberate criticism of the intellect, to diminish beyond a certain point. He is convinced of an attainable unity in the individual man; and he is convinced of a unity of some kind between that

attainable unity of the individual man and the Universe beyond him.

We may compare his case with that of a mathematician who has long meditated upon an apparently insoluble problem. Suddenly, the solution is, quite unexpectedly, given to him in a kind of 'intuition.' Nevertheless, the chief task remains to do. He has to work out his solution, and set it fairly and squarely as the conclusion of a process of deduction; that is to say, he has to incorporate his solution with the body of his previous knowledge. So with the recipient of mystical experience. He likewise receives after long and unfruitful brooding over an insoluble situation an answer to his problem. He, too, if he is to avoid delusion, must work out his solution and incorporate it, if he can, with the body of his previous knowledge.

§ 4

There is nothing in the residual convictions which remain from the mystical experience which is contrary to reasonable expectation. That man should be capable of experiencing himself immediately as a unity; that there is a unity of some kind between the experienced unity of himself and the Universe beyond him; that the experience of the one unity should be inseparably connected with the experience of the other – there is, in all this, whatever the rationalists may assert, nothing contrary to reason.

Even for the pure Intelligence it is a possibility that there may be moments when the individual is able to surmount the limitations of the intellectual consciousness and achieve an immediate apprehension of reality. Even the pure Intelligence may become aware that it is the intellectual consciousness which divides the human being against himself, and imposes a complete separation between him and the objects of the external world. An intellectual critique of the Intelligence, such as that of Kant or Bergson, is quite capable of establishing that this separation of the individual from himself, and of himself from the external world, is a necessary condition of the operations of the Intelligence. Without the distinction of subject from object, both in the external and the internal world, intellectual knowledge is inconceivable. If, therefore, there is non-intellectual and immediate knowledge of any kind, it must necessarily be of the kind indicated by the mystical experience, when metaphors have been eliminated from the description – namely, an immediate self-awareness, through the instrument of one individual consciousness, of one all-comprehending subject.

There is not, and there cannot be, a conflict between the mystical experience, when metaphors have been eliminated from the description, and intellectual knowledge; because intellectual knowledge, by the law of its operation, is incapable of such 'knowledge' as is given in the mystical experi-

ence. The two kinds of knowledge (for which it is unfortunate that a single word should generally be used) exist, so to speak, in different dimensions; they cannot meet in combat or contradiction.

If then we regard mystical 'knowledge' under the limitations of scope allowed to it by intellectual knowledge, we are compelled to regard it as an immediate self-awareness of one all-comprehending subject. It is evident that this self-awareness of the one all-comprehending subject happens in the individual consciousness. A fundamental unity in the Universe of which the subject is necessarily a part, reasserts itself through him because of the momentary breaking down of the conditions of intellectual knowledge. It is not, and cannot be, that in such a moment the individual, as such, is aware of that unity, for that would reconstitute the distinction between subject and object which is obliterated, and be an act of intellectual knowledge; it is that the fundamental unity is aware of itself in him.

From this it should be clear that there is no good reason, nor indeed, any reason at all, to believe that the mystical experience, considered as pure experience, is really in any way different from the anæsthetic experience. That also seems to be a momentary self-awareness of a fundamental Unity, which occurs in the individual consciousness because of the temporary breaking down of the conditions of intellectual knowledge. That this breaking down is

deliberately induced by the influence of a chemical agent upon the physical system is merely an interesting accident; it does not affect the nature of the pure experience.

But the anæsthetic experience is purely anomalous to the psychological continuity of the anæsthetic patient. Its effect is transient; the patient emerges from it into normal consciousness with nothing but the vague memory of a 'revelation' and a weakened energy. The mystical experience is an integral part of a long psychological process; its effects are permanent: it leaves behind it an immense afflux of energy, and a radical psychic reorganization.

These differences are cardinal. But so is the likeness. In both cases the consciousness of the self is overcome; that is to say, the differentiation of the life-stream which is the self of ordinary experience is temporarily abrogated, so that there is a moment of experience of the undifferentiated self, which is inevitably, not experience of a *self* at all. But whereas, in the anæsthetic experience, this abrogation of the normal self is imposed from without, in the mystical experience it is achieved from within by a long period of intense psychological preparation. The necessary conditions of the mystical experience are spiritual struggle, prolonged moral conflict, and a resolute integrity which demands an exacting application of the will. These preliminaries, though they culminate in a sense of absolute

despair, are in themselves a considerable achievement, though the subject cannot recognize them as such; and the achievement is enduring. It is this achievement which is at once the condition of the pure experience in the mystical experience, and the sole means of being able to recognize its meaning and use it.

With this phrase – the mystical capacity 'to use' the pure experience – we come within sight of at least a provisional answer to the question: what meaning can be attached to the notion of 'obedience to the mystical certainty'? The subject has had immediate experience of himself as an actual unity, and simultaneously of a unity between that unity and the Universe. Henceforward, he possesses two things: an ideal, which is actual, of an inward harmony, and a conviction of ultimate security. Further, by reason of that intensification of the physical faculties which follows the liberation of the psychic stream, he has an enrichment of primary perception, which Eckhart described as 'seeing the sun in all things'. He is convinced of the unity, and he sees the beauty of the Universe. He is also convinced of his own unity, and he feels that only out of that unity, which he regards as his true Self or Soul, can his own real acts spring. 'Obedience to the mystical certainty' is, in short, self-expression of the Self as actual unity. A necessary condition of this unity of the Self is the conviction of the unity of the Universe including the Self, for this con-

viction alone is operative to prevent that conflict between thought and emotion, Mind and Heart, out of which the disunited self arises.

§ 5

Once the identity of the mystical experience and the anæsthetic experience as 'pure experience' is accepted, and both are conceived as a lapse into the immediate self-experience of undifferentiated biological unity, the interesting question arises: whether, in the mystic, his experience is the outcome of a repressed and diverted sexuality.

Such frank questions are generally horrifying to the lover of 'spirituality'. They ought not to be; and part of our intention here is to demonstrate that to a true spirituality they cannot be horrifying. True spirituality shrinks from no fact; rather, it delights in all facts. The pure phenomenon is its natural object. That is the reason why it cannot accept the impure and distorted phenomena of mechanism and rationalism.

It is highly probable that the mystical experience is, in a sense, the outcome of a repressed, and therefore diverted sexuality. There is nothing degrading in that. A child is the outcome of sexuality; and there is nothing degrading in having a child, or being one. Further, though the cruder psychologists now speak as though there were, there is nothing disreputable in repressing sexuality. On

the contrary, it has been held for centuries, and for centuries before Christianity was known, as a manifestation of human virtue. Not that we believe, for a moment, that the repression of sexuality, as an end in itself, is a virtue. But still less do we believe, with some of the Freudian psychologists, that not to repress sexuality is a virtue. That is manifest nonsense, based on the now almost universal confusion between the biological and metabiological modes of human existence.

Sexual repression is inevitable and necessary in the metabiological mode. One of the ways by which man has advanced from the pure biological to the metabiological, is by the supersession of sexual promiscuity by love and loyalty. Love and loyalty can only endure on a basis of sexual repression. Such sexual repression is not, of course, absolute; but the concentration of the sexuality upon one chosen individual clearly requires that it should be suppressed with regard to others. Sexual repression is sexual refinement.

A deeply interesting example of the operation of sexual repression is the case of Keats while he was writing *Hyperion*. His letters show clearly that he was continually travailed by physical desire; they show equally clearly that he felt he could not, with his loved brother Tom dying before his eyes, even attempt to satisfy his desire. He was not free even to look for a mate; he could not allow himself to fall in love. To fall in love would have been to forget his

brother's suffering; and that was impossible for him. To indulge the biological man would have been to violate the metabiological man. So the primary energy – the Libido of Dr. Jung's psychology – was poured into the 'abstract images' of *Hyperion*, and the world gained a masterpiece. The moment that his brother was dead, and the danger of metabiological violation was over, he fell violently and tragically in love with the first girl five foot high who came his way, and *Hyperion* was abandoned. It was only resumed, and that briefly, when the biological impulse was again thwarted by new realizations of the metabiological man.

It is, therefore, as Jung insisted, mistaken to describe such a process as this as sublimation of the *sexual* impulse. What Jung calls the Libido is prior to specifically sexual manifestation. It is the undifferentiated primal urge of life towards more life: it can become sexual, that is, purely biological; it can equally well become metabiological. Whether or not it is desirable that this primal urge of life towards more life should, in certain cases, be deliberately and completely barred from pure biological fulfilment, for the purpose of metabiological expression, is a question which cannot be lightly answered. What can be affirmed, definitely, is that men and women should *know* what they are doing when they thus behave. No doubt it is almost impossible for a human being to know what he is doing when it is actually being done. It is hard, for instance, to

imagine what *Hyperion* would have been like, if Keats had been perfectly aware of the nature of the process that was taking place in him. Assuredly, it would have been very different from the *Hyperion* we have. But there is not the least reason to suppose that it would have been inferior.

There is little doubt that the mystical experience is intimately connected with asceticism. Asceticism is of more than one kind. The voluntary asceticism of Keats, which we have described, is not the same as the systematic asceticism of the monk or nun; and, to our own mind, the former kind is by far the saner. But, essentially, they conform to the same pattern. The biological is denied at the call of the metabiological.

Systematic denial of the biological, in the aptly constituted man, should obviously result in equally systematic mystical experience; when mystical experience becomes systematic it seems to us of doubtful value. The proper use of the mystical experience, by which we mean the fullest use that can be made of it, is to overcome system. The end of systematic asceticism should be the clear perception that asceticism is only a means. This clear perception appears to have been attained both by Jesus and the Buddha. But they were original and creative men, whose asceticism was rather voluntary than systematic. The founders of great religions are naturally different from their followers.

Systematic asceticism, namely, the asceticism

which is imposed by authority and deliberately followed as a rule of life, and is not, like voluntary asceticism, the free adjustment of the individual to the demands of his own metabiological self, probably deserves all the vituperation it has received. The mysticism to which it leads is often sterile; and this for an obvious reason. The individual who is so constituted that he can accept asceticism as an authoritative rule is practically bound to interpret his mystical experience by authoritative rule also: it becomes merely the confirmation of the religious authority from which the rule of the life is derived. The metabiological freedom which is the highest gift that the mystical experience has to give cannot thus be realized. Instead of independence of authority, there is enhanced submission to authority; instead of creative newness, exaggerated repetition. The mystical experience, ultimately, is like any other experience, in that its value depends upon what men make of it. The systematic ascetic is not likely to make much of it.

But the principle of asceticism, as Nietzsche was the first to show in a brilliant chapter of *The Genealogy of Morals*, is perfectly sound. The denial of the pure biological *is* a means to metabiological creation. But it is only justified when the end is really achieved and there is metabiological creation. The recurrence of mere beatific communion with an imaginary God is not metabiological creation; it is continuous biological relapse. A great deal of

religious mysticism deserves no better name. To turn the mystical experience into value is the decisive task; and that depends on the man.

When the meaning, and the mechanics, of asceticism can thus be clearly realized in the consciousness, it becomes doubtful whether asceticism can endure. Completely self-conscious asceticism is almost a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, asceticism will have its analogue in the future; as indeed it has it now. The man who willingly and deliberately surrenders domestic felicity in pursuit of truth is ascetic in the right way. Value is pitted against value, and one is consciously preferred. He knows what he is doing. Likewise, we make no doubt that mysticism will have its analogue in the future. A completely self-conscious mysticism is, even more obviously than a completely self-conscious asceticism, a contradiction in terms. But perhaps it is the peculiar duty of this generation of men to make reality of contradictions in terms.

§ 6

There are two categories of thought which are applicable to the facts we have been describing. One is the religious, the other the biological. In the religious category the essential fact of the mystical experience is the simultaneous and interdependent discovery of the reality of the Soul and the reality of God, and the consubstantiality of the

Soul and God. And it is worth remembering that the greatest master of the religious expression of the mystical certainty, namely Jesus, was impelled also to use biological language. 'Soul' and 'Life' were in his language interchangeable. To save one's Soul and to save one's Life were in his thought the same. Nor is there the faintest reason for supposing that he used the word Life in any esoteric sense. Certainly, Life was not for him the ordinary life of the divided self ; Life was, on the contrary, the Life of the true, and integrated Self or Soul. But this Life was as much a simple fact of experience as the ordinary life of the divided self.

In the biological category, the mystical experience consists in man's simultaneous self-awareness of himself as biological unity, and of the unity of that biological unity with the Universe. This self-awareness of himself as biological unity, recognized as significant and turned into value, is what we call the 'metabiological unity' of the individual. It is utterly different from and not to be confused with man's intellectual consciousness of himself as a biological unity. As a matter of fact it is evident, on a moment's reflection, that no intellectual self-consciousness of man as a biological unity is possible. It is an empty phrase. For such an intellectual self-consciousness demands and depends upon a total distinction between the self knowing and the self known. The self known cannot be the biological

unity of the self, because, by definition, it excludes the self knowing. The self knowing and the self known in their indistinguishable unity form the true and only biological unity of man.

It is true that Biology does not at present recognize this. But that is no cause for surprise. Even the simple fact that Biology and Psychology are continuous is hardly recognized as yet. And Psychology in its traditional forms is scarcely conscious that it is the science of specifically human Biology. What we have called the true and only biological unity of man might accurately be called the psychological unity of man, if Psychology were really aware of its place in a complete hierarchy of the sciences. To indicate clearly the nature of a true Psychology, we have chosen the term, Metabiology. We therefore say that the true biological unity of man is his metabiological unity.

§ 7

We have now substantiated our claim that Jesus was a remarkable example of a new species of the genus *homo*, and that the cause of his newness lay in his experience of the mystical certainty and his obedience to it. His experience of the mystical certainty was an experience of biological unity taking place as an essential phase in an organic psychological process, and, therefore, an achievement of metabiological unity; his obedience to the

mystical certainty was the self-expression of metabiological unity.

This metabiological unity appears to lie on the direct road of human evolution. The essentials of the condition appear to be a living conviction, based on experience, of the fundamental and living unity of the true Self, and a conviction, based on experience, of the unity of the true Self with the Universe. These two convictions are inseparable; each is the condition of the other. Further, the conviction of the unity of the true Self with the Universe appears to be the sole and sufficient prophylactic against the recurrence of that division of the self, from the extremity of which the mystical experience of metabiological unity springs. A conviction of the unity of the true Self with the Universe prevents, and alone is capable of preventing, the internecine opposition of emotion and thought. Jesus was a new man, because he achieved, discovered, and expressed, in word and act, a new, real and permanent unity of man.

§ 8

With these provisional conclusions concerning the true nature of the mystical experience, which we shall attempt to carry further in a later section, we may return to our contemplation of the life of Jesus as belonging wholly to the natural order.

We have found good reason to believe that the

mystical experience, with which the historical record of that life begins, and from which its originality derives, belongs wholly to the natural order. Essentially, it consists in a long and peculiar psychological preparation, during which the cleavage between thought and emotion becomes extreme. This extreme cleavage of the psychological unity eventually induces a 'relapse' into the immediate awareness of an all-pervading biological unity; but, since the extreme cleavage is in itself a rare psychological (or spiritual) achievement, it enables the subject to take advantage and make metabiological value of the unity of which he is immediately aware in himself. For him it has meaning. Its meaning is that, ultimately, the cleavage between thought and emotion, or between the instinctive and the intellectual man, is appearance only. Beyond the appearance there is unity. Whether this 'beyond' is, in reality, 'above' or 'below', is immaterial. Probably, it is 'below'. The distinguishing mark of the mystical experience is that it supervenes upon a period of intense psychological preparation which enables the subject to set a metabiological value upon the unity which he discovers, or which discovers itself in him.

This unity is a reality; and the true conviction which the subject of mystical experience receives of the existence of this reality is of incalculable value for Life. Now value for Life is not the same as value

for life. To distinguish between the meanings of a word by a capital letter may seem arbitrary; but the distinction is real. The Life of Jesus was magnificent and sublime and beautiful; his life was painful and disastrous. We insist that this distinction, which may seem subjective and temperamental, is on the contrary absolutely objective and truly scientific. That which we call Life, with the large letter, is complete inward coherence in accordance with the higher unity of the individual man; life, with the small letter, is biological manifestation. Jesus' conviction of an ultimate and all-pervading Unity produced a perfection of inward coherence, it was a fount of Life; it also led straight to the violent ending of the mere biological manifestation, it was definitely destructive of life.

To transpose the picture for a moment into terms which for the ordinary reader are less tainted with subjectivity, we may imagine Jesus, not as a new man, but as a new animal. Among the herd is suddenly born one with a new comeliness and grace. For a little while, there is a pause. The herd stares fascinated at the new thing. Then there is an almost imperceptible movement of the whole, as one. It gathers together, grows solid, surrounds, advances. A sudden rush, a momentary flurry, and the new thing of beauty is trampled underfoot and torn to pieces. Its Life has been fatal to its life.

Men are but animals. We do not deplore it. It is a cause for wonder and thanksgiving. Remember

Keats' vision of humanity at the time of his mystical experience.

'The greater part of men make their way with the same instinctiveness, the same unwandering eye from their purposes, the same animal eagerness as the Hawk. The Hawk wants a Mate, so does the Man – look at them both, they set about it and procure one in the same manner. They want both a nest and they both set about one in the same manner. The noble animal Man for his amusement smokes his pipe – the Hawk balances about the clouds – that is the only difference in their leisures. This it is that makes the Amusement of Life – to a speculative Mind – I go among the Fields and catch a glimpse of a Stoat or a Fieldmouse peeping out of the withered grass – the creature hath a purpose, and its eyes are bright with it. I go amongst the buildings of a city and I see a man hurrying along – to what? the creature hath a purpose and its eyes are bright with it. But then, as Wordsworth says "we have all one human heart" – There is an electric fire in human nature tending to purify – so that among these human creatures there is continually some birth of new heroism. . . .'

To look thus keenly and charitably upon the human race, oneself included, as animal is the way to wisdom. Such a view, to a healthy and sensitive mind, contains nothing degrading; far from it, it is full of wonder and deep satisfaction. Then we can grasp the history of humanity as a living whole; and

then we can revere the worth and accept the destiny of 'the birth of new heroism'. To know what we are is the only way to know what we may become.

Jesus realized in himself a new kind of organic coherence. On the plane of biological manifestation, all men are organically coherent. The animal is, by nature, organically coherent. But man differs from the animal by his powers of emotion and thought and will. These powers make for incoherence. His manifest duty is to strive towards a condition in which these specifically human powers are brought into a true harmony with his inevitable biological coherence on the animal plane. This condition is a new kind of coherence; this is his metabiological coherence. Achieved, it makes of him an organism of a new kind. Such an organism was Jesus.

To say that the achievement and the maintenance of this new kind of organism depended upon beliefs that are impossible to civilized man is superficial ignorance. Those beliefs are not impossible to civilized man. It would be more correct to say that man is completely civilized only when he possesses those beliefs. But the sole condition of understanding those beliefs, is to understand that their expression is metaphorical. Do not for one moment imagine that, because Jesus was a carpenter in a Galilean village, and had to express his verities in a framework of belief which is no longer natural to men, he would not have been able, had he lived to-day, to express those verities in conceptions as

familiar to us as the religious and Messianic conceptions were to his age, and in language just as wonderful as was his own for pregnancy and poetic power. Jesus expressed hitherto undiscovered truths* concerning the nature of man in the only language which was available to him. Those truths are as true to-day as they were on the day he uttered them; and they are just as necessary.

The achievement and maintenance of the new kind of organism that was Jesus did not at all depend upon his having beliefs which are impossible to civilized man. It did depend, very directly, upon his holding those beliefs, because those beliefs, apart from their metaphorical expression, were true, and new truths. Their metaphorical expression was the only method, available to him, of declaring that a new kind of unity in man was possible, that it was the duty of all men to achieve it, that it was the duty of all men to obey it when achieved; and, further, that this new kind of unity was impossible to achieve or maintain without the unshakable conviction that there was an ultimate unity between man and the Universe, and that this unity could be given in immediate experience, and ratified by simple contemplation. If those beliefs are impossible to civilized man, then man had better give up being

*We are speaking only of the Western world. Nearly all the truths enunciated by Jesus were formulated, in more intellectual terms, by the Buddha and by Lao-tse: and, doubtless, by other Eastern sages.

civilized; for civilization is, in that case, only a synonym for a condition not only of imperviousness to truth but of final life-frustration.

§ 9

These truths Jesus knew, and he lived by them. It is more simple to know them (though that is not very simple) than to live by them. But his heroic determination to live by them to the uttermost, to obey Life until life was destroyed, has made it easier for ensuing generations of men. The new organic coherence which he achieved has been a sign and a token for nineteen centuries in the West. Men have expressed their conviction in many ways, but they have never ceased to feel the conviction that : There is beauty; there is a new Man. And the more nearly we come to understanding the cause of that beauty, and the reality of that newness, the less of wonder shall we feel that centuries of men have said: There was God.

Men have striven to emulate him, and they too have achieved very wonderful things. We all emulate him, and often not least nor least successfully those who would, with their intellectual consciousness, most vehemently repudiate the imputation. Whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, in our modern world; those things wherein we may believe that we are a little finer, a little more human, a little less ape-

like than our forebears of a thousand years ago – nearly all, but not all, derive from him. To deny that his influence has been predominant in the epoch of which we are the inheritors, is to deny the simplest fact. If the Christian Church, if all Christian Churches, were to disappear to-morrow, that influence would not be diminished by one single impulse. It is now ineradicable. And those who have most cogently proclaimed the necessity of eradicating his influence, will always be found to be preaching the eradication of an influence that is not his, in the name (though they may not acknowledge it) of the doctrine that was his own.

To imagine that his day is over, that we can make a new beginning, and that we can make it without him, is moonshine. *Naturam expellas furca; tamen usque recurret.* Jesus is simply human nature, in a new form which, for perfectly sound and permanently operative reasons, is bound to fascinate the gaze of humanity. If humanity is not fascinated by that new manifestation of itself, and is indifferent to that embodiment of its own potentialities, it is either because it has become, in some essential respect, less than human, or because it simply does not dare to look – and that cowardice, or prejudice, is itself less than human.

It is absolutely impossible to make a new beginning without him. There are no such things in human history as new beginnings. Nineteen hundred years of Christianity have left Jesus, so to

speak, in our bones. If we try to push him out of our minds, he is busily at work in our instincts. To ignore him, is to ignore human history, and ourselves. Our duty is to get him out of our bones, and into our consciousness: not to let his influence work on us by devious ways, but to understand it, and, having understood, to accept or reject it, as fully conscious men.

Life without the consciousness of our continuity with the past is only a half-conscious life. The most important fact in the past of the West is Christianity. We have, therefore, to be conscious of our continuity with Christianity. This can only be, say some, if we accept the Orthodox faith. That position, with all respect to its brilliant upholders, is nonsense. There is no returning to the past, and those who do return have betrayed the continuity which it was their duty to maintain. Continuity is evolution and change, and to be conscious of our continuity with Christianity is to be at the same moment conscious that it can no longer supply valid categories for our experience and conscious of the reason why it did supply them for so many hundreds of years. To understand Christianity is to leave it behind for ever.

§ 10

Christianity (by which we mean Catholic Orthodoxy) has, as we shall see, the just right to claim that it is more than Jesus. Nevertheless, Christianity is,

in the main, the fact of Jesus and a genuine and thorough-going explanation of that fact. From one point of view, the fact is corrupted, and the explanation of it corrupted by the intrusion of the supernatural upon the natural. But before we begin to work up indignation upon that score, let us make sure that we have looked at the fact as patiently as the long generations of men who were impelled to use the category of the supernatural to account for it. And when we have made sure of that, let us ask ourselves sincerely what categories of thought will avail to describe or explain the fact. We shall find the answer is: that none of our habitual categories of thought is adequate to the fact.

We have a choice before us. Either we must turn back to the old and outmoded category of the supernatural, or we must advance to a new category altogether. One or the other: but no compromise is possible. The fact is adamantine and compulsive. We can ignore it, if we like, altogether. The price we pay for that is ignorance of our past, and unconsciousness of what we are. But if we choose to attend to it, and to be faithful to it, then the dilemma is upon us. Either this fact is supernatural, or it is natural. If it is supernatural, then be honest and take the consequences. If it is natural, be honest and take the consequences. The consequences in the one case, are Christian Orthodoxy; in the other, new categories of thought.

We have chosen the latter course. We have

accepted the fact that new categories of thought are inevitably imposed upon us by a faithful scrutiny of the life of Jesus. By accepting the necessity we have found ourselves involved in a difficult task for which the powers of one man are assuredly inadequate; but, just in so far as we have accepted it, we have the comfort of the conviction that we have been at once faithful to the whole fact, and have been honest in our explanation of it.

Not to recognize and to acknowledge the compulsive fascination of the man Jesus is to be blind. Really to believe, or to behave as though one believed, that he was a deluded fanatic, is simply to be inhuman. Probably, there is not a man alive who is capable of apprehending the story of Jesus, and is also capable of saying: I could have done better, at that point or this. He might say: I could not have believed what Jesus believed. Which is very probably true. But if he has a little historical imagination and a little candour, he will hasten to confess that had he been living at that time in Galilee, he would have been believing something infinitely more outrageous to reason than that which Jesus believed. What Jesus believed is hard to believe, less because we have grown beyond it, than because we have not grown up to it.

We claim to have shown that the coherence and beauty of Jesus' life and teaching was functionally dependent upon the nature of his beliefs. It may be objected still that the beliefs were erroneous. The

beauty and coherence of his life, in this objection, would be functionally dependent upon a system of erroneous beliefs. That would be shocking to our hearts, though not to our heads; and men of this generation have had their hearts shocked so often that they are quite incapable of dismissing such an objection on the mere ground that it is painful. For myself, I confess that this explanation was for long my own. I was convinced that Jesus was the victim of a noble and pathetic illusion. That this conviction changed was due, I frankly acknowledge, to my own mystical experience. Then for a long time I was torn between an immediate conviction that Jesus' beliefs, though necessarily expressed in metaphor, were fundamentally true, and an equally strong conviction that at a certain point in his life he fell victim to an illusion – namely, the illusion that Messiah was to come, and that he was to be that Messiah. It was only after long and obstinate meditation, and a slow clarification of the mystical certainty, that I understood that, in reality, his conception of himself as the Messiah was necessary if he was to be obedient to the mystical certainty to the end. That belief was necessary to him if he was to achieve his destiny: nothing less could maintain him, when he was finally alone.

What it comes to is this. Jesus believed in a unity of man, and a unity of man with the universe. This unity in both cases was a harmony. Man, having experienced his own unity, had to obey it: that is to

say, he had to follow the impulse that was dominant in the moments when he was the unity of himself. By acting from his true, and metabiological Self, he 'obeyed his Father's will'. So Jesus went on, always referring back to his true Self in the crucial decisions of his life. The path he thus followed, or rather the trail he thus blazed into the unknown, led him inevitably to isolation and death. There was no escape. The steps followed inexorably from the glorious or fatal first. He was alone, and doomed to die. He knew both these things, we may be sure, with absolute certainty. How was he to accept death? How was his death, whose pain and horror he foresaw, to manifest the unity and harmony of life? How was this fearful happening to be knit into a scheme of things where not a sparrow fell to the ground but in accordance with the universal harmony? He had his choice; and perhaps the fate of the world hung upon it. He might have cried out in his soul that it was a lie that had brought him thither, and turned away in utter loathing. Instead, he said: This is inevitable, this is my destiny. I must be Messiah.

Illusion? When a man is veritably a man of destiny, perhaps no illusion is possible. His mind becomes the servant of his Soul: which is what the mind must be.

§ 11

The word Soul imposes itself. We have described

and defined the Soul. It is the metabiological unity of man, the true Self. We have changed the language, in consonance with our stubborn purposes. But the Soul is a reality. The wise people who imagine that because the Soul is a religious conception, it is, therefore, an imaginary entity, are mistaken. It is, on the face of it, hardly likely that a conception which was necessary to the accurate description of a human being for some thousands of years, should suddenly be found to have no basis in fact. Men have learned many things in the last few centuries; but it is very questionable whether they have learned much more about themselves. An age which can take Behaviourism seriously as a psychology might be said to be ignorant of the Soul for the simple reason that it had lost it.

The Soul is discredited. The reason for its disrepute is that, in the religious psychology to which the Soul rightly belongs, it is inseparable from God. God needs the Soul to know him, and the Soul needs God to know. Since God is under a cloud, the Soul also is inevitably in eclipse. We have no quarrel at all with the supersession of the names; but we do quarrel with those who imagine that because the names are obsolete, the realities which they represented have ceased to exist. Such minds inhabit the cloud-cuckoo land of rationalism.

The relation which used to be expressed as the relation between the Soul and God is a real relation

between realities. Translated into our new language the relation is this: that the metabiological unity of man depends upon the metabiological unity of the Universe. In simpler terms, man can never attain his own organic unity save by believing that the universe is an organic unity.

Now this conviction, as we have tried to show, is given in a manner unassailable by intellectual criticism in the mystical experience. Had I lived a few hundred years ago, I should, after a long period of religious despair, have suddenly been convinced by immediate experience of the reality and interdependence of the Soul and God : and there would have been the end of it. I should not have had to worry my brains any further: I should have got on with the business of doing the will of God until I fell into hands of the Holy Office. But, having the good fortune to be born at a time when not even Christians take Christianity very seriously, I am spared the *auto da fé*. To make up for it, I am racked by my intellect. I am tormented with the duty of making my immediate conviction of the universe, upon which the unity of myself depends, intellectually comprehensible.

This book, so far, has been my attempt to fulfil that duty. It seems to me that the duty is in process of being genuinely fulfilled. But those who have followed me in the effort so far must admit that its method is curious, and not without an interest of its own. I find that the mystical experience,

unanalysed, enables me – whether this is presumption others must decide – to understand the life of Jesus as an event belonging wholly to the natural order. The reward of my understanding is an altogether new amazement at the astonishing beauty and coherence of that life. Here I find, as I found in the case of Keats, an inevitability of beauty such as I had not imagined possible in a human life. Further, I find that this extraordinary beauty has been recognized for many centuries, and been the centre from which the chief dynamic influence upon humanity has radiated.

Let us pause at that point, and consider the sequence that appears thus to be established. The mystical certainty is that there is a unity of man and a unity of the Universe, and that these are interdependent. The mystical certainty created in the man who appears most fully to have apprehended and obeyed it a new and astonishing beauty of Life. That beauty of Life apprehended in all manner of ways has been the chief dynamic influence upon mankind. The world, thus regarded, as one in which the new beauty of one individual life has been the chief dynamic influence, begins to reveal a new kind of unity. It is, in some real sense, a living world, a vast creature. It is no longer incoherent. If it is not a unity, it is something better than a unity; it is an organism. And the unity of man which is immediate relation with that unity, and depends upon the knowledge of that unity,

is also something better than a unity; it is an organism.

That is the bare outline of a process of thought which makes no claim to be a chain of logical reasoning. But it claims to be, nevertheless, real thought. It is the following in the realm of thought of the mystical certainty to the end.

§ 12

We will endeavour to make explicit the process of thought of which the bare outline has just been given. Essentially, it consists in the process of bringing the mystical certainty completely into consciousness.

The first stage in the process is the experience of the mystical certainty. It is so potent, so overpowering, so seemingly immediate, that, so long as its direct influence persists, the subject lacks the power, and even the desire to analyse it. To him it is veritably no less than a second birth. Even for one born at the end of the nineteenth century, wholly recalcitrant to the forms and conceptions of religion, its natural expression is the declaration that God and the Soul are real, and these realities are interdependent and consubstantial.

This experience, 'proved on one's pulses', and naturally taking shape in this troublesome conviction, proves to be the key to the understanding of Jesus as a phenomenon in the natural order. With

it, all that is humanly valuable in his life appears coherent, without it there is fundamental discrepancy. At the same time, the conviction of the verity of the truth which he proclaimed, and by which he lived, makes almost unendurable the disappointment and agony of his death.

Two simultaneous processes of thought then begin to work. They are in appearance contradictory. In accordance with the temper which brought us to the point of the mystical experience itself, namely, the refusal to allow either Mind or Heart to obliterate the other, we accept these two contradictory processes of thought. The one, which appertains to the Mind, is the conviction that the final agony of Jesus is the unshakable proof that the initial certainty from which the acts of his life directly and inevitably derived, was mistaken. The other, which appertains to the Heart, is the conviction that the agony of his death is the final and necessary perfection of the beauty of his life. He was not mistaken.

At length, these contradictory and hostile convictions, maintained in their fullness, begin to merge into one another, and by their merging to reawaken that unity of Mind and Heart which was given to the mystical experience. But now this unity, which was then given immediately, is now mediately experienced, through the pertinacious contemplation of an historical fact. The unity of Mind and Heart in the true Self, and the unity of the Universe, and the

unity of these two unities, which was the conviction by which the life and death of Jesus were determined, is confirmed as true by the experience of the extraordinary beauty of that life and death. So long as we express Jesus' conviction as the relation of the Soul to a loving and personal God, so long will the nature of his death prove that conviction to have been delusion. But so soon as we understand that his conviction was metaphorically expressed, because he had no other means of expressing it, we can also understand that his essential conviction of the unity of the Universe, of an achievable unity of man, and of the unity of those two unities, was veritably confirmed by his death, and the perfection of life which it reveals.

Thus contemplated, his life and death confirm that there is unity in the Universe, and unity between that unity and the unity achievable by man. Further, in this contemplation, the opposition between the Mind and the Heart of the beholder is overcome. By the operation of this fact upon him, and by his refusing to allow the reaction of either his Mind or his Heart to obliterate the reaction of the other, he touches for a moment the achievable unity of man.

Thus the mystical certainty from which this process of thought began passes from immediacy to mediacy. It is re-established in a different order. In this order, harmony appears to be a more appropriate word than unity. The mystical certainty, in

its new form, runs thus: There is an attainable harmony in Man, and there is a harmony in the Universe, and there is harmony between these two harmonies: one is dependent upon the other.

Then begins a further twofold process of thought upon this conclusion. This, says the Mind, is the conclusion of the Heart. But the truth is that Jesus was but a single man, and his life and death a single history, among thousands of millions of histories. Granted its extraordinary perfection, how *can* that extraordinary perfection reveal the harmony of the universe, or induce the harmony achievable by man in its beholder? That this latter harmony is but temporary, the importunate questions of me, the Mind, are witness. Once more I am in rebellion. I do not claim, for I begin to learn my lesson, wholly to override the Heart's authority; but I claim that to allow the Heart's authority to override my own is the way, not to truth, but to illusion. I must be convinced.

The struggle begins again. Neither Mind nor Heart can be denied. The Mind admits the unity, the harmony and the beauty of Jesus' life; it admits that this unity, harmony and beauty sprang from the unshakable convictions of Jesus; it admits that this unity, harmony, and beauty, have been a revelation to countless generations of men. But what, it asks, if those his unshakable convictions upon which all this depends, were ultimately illusion? Illusion creative of extraordinary beauty of life; illusion, it

may be, necessary to the creation of such beauty of life. But what if illusion?

Then, says the Heart, if this illusion is creative of such beauty, let me keep it. No, says the Mind, if there be illusion in the foundations, the building will crumble: it can give us no enduring shelter. Then, says the Heart, at least examine it well. Well, and with good will, says the Mind.

The Mind admits that in its primary form it cannot shake the immediate mystical certainty. It is beyond its competence. The Mind further admits that the conviction of an ultimate unity is productive of unity in the convinced. But this ultimate unity of the mystical experience, which may be real, can be operative only in those who possess it. It is denied to the most of men.

Is there an ultimate unity of a kind which Mind itself can positively acknowledge, and not merely negatively entertain? And the answer is: Yes, it can acknowledge the biological unity of life. If that be the Unity that is given in the mystical experience, the Mind can positively accept it.

But that precisely is the unity that is given in the mystical experience, as we have seen. The mystical experience is an immediate experience of the biological unity of life, occurring in a man as the result of a very particular kind of psychological effort. What gives the experience its value, as distinct from its reality, is the power in the subject to make this primary biological experience an integral part of a

metabiological (or spiritual) process. The mystical experience is, essentially, the complete reassertion of the biological unity of man.

This complete reassertion of the biological unity of man cannot, by nature, be intellectual. An intellectual assertion of the biological unity of man cannot be complete, but only partial, for it presupposes a distinction between the self knowing and the self known. A complete reassertion of the biological unity of man is possible only in action, in life. The metabiological unity of man is a new kind of beauty and coherence in action. It is, according to our symbols, the transformation of life into Life.

This is positively acceptable to Mind. Indeed, if it did not exist as possibility it would have been necessary to invent it. Such a possibility is definitely imposed upon any Mind which seriously accepts the evolutionary principle. At a certain point in the evolutionary process a new kind of man emerged. His newness consisted in his power to make use of an immediate experience of the biological unity of life to overcome the inevitable tendencies of the emotional and intellectual parts within him towards a discord which thwarted life. The extremity of this discord was at once the cause of the biological experience, and the condition of being able to seize its significance and to make use of it. A human life of a new kind, possessing a new kind of coherence, called by us a metabiological coherence, had been lived.

To this new manifestation of human life, mankind has been responsive, first, by sheer animal hostility, then by veneration, and now by understanding. For many centuries, in many forms, it has been the universal ideal of the West. Slowly, painfully, it has, as it were, insisted on being realized. Life has blindly striven to perpetuate its new perfection. It would not, and could not, let it go. Human history since the emergence of that new manifestation of human life is revealed not as unity, nor as harmony, but as organic process.

This also is positively acceptable to Mind. And the Heart asks no more. Mind and Heart are finally at one. Neither, at any point in the process of thought has been sacrificed to the other. In the contemplation of Jesus as a new kind of man, with an organic newness that is absolutely comprehensible, and of human history since his emergence as an evolutionary process powerfully influenced by that newness, thought and emotion are at once satisfied. More, they are merged in one, by the unity of that which they contemplate.

And this unity of Mind and Heart is in itself an organic unity, and it is in organic unity with the unity which it contemplates. It is an integral part of the process; the process is momentarily self-conscious in the man who thus regards it. He, by thus regarding it, attains his own metabiological unity, which the process demands that he should attain. Of the process which his mind acknowledges and his

heart approves he is become himself a vehicle. The path is clear for Life to move onward through him.

Thus on the third level, the mystical certainty is re-established. On the third and final and completely naturalistic level it runs thus: There is organic unity attainable by man, and there is an organic unity in the Universe, and the organic unity of man cannot be maintained without a knowledge of the organic unity of the universe. Less dazzling, perhaps, than the blinding certainty of the reality of the Soul and of God, yet not alien and remote from it: indeed, its direct and sole true descendant, conscious of and grateful to its heroic ancestry.

3

THE WORLD AS ORGANISM

§ 1

We have now transposed the mystical experience from the supernatural order into the order of a complete naturalism. This process, as we have described it, has followed the sequence of the author's own progressive disintoxication from that experience. The autobiographical element in this account of the process may be irrelevant; it is also possible that it may be essential. At all events, it appeared to be necessary in the interest of mere veracity.

The question now arises whether the mystical certainty, thus transposed into the order of a complete naturalism, is acceptable to any man of honesty and good will. Have we attained a picture of the Universe, such that it really satisfies both the demands of the mind and the desires of the heart, and by satisfying these enables an organic unity of the inward man to be established, and a unity of that organic unity with the organic unity of the Universe?

We have spoken, rather boldly, and without pausing to justify the phrase, of 'the organic unity of the Universe.' That is, perhaps an unwarrantable extension of the more modest phrase, 'the biological unity of life.' Yet there is excuse for the extension.

It is impossible to regard organic life in the terrestrial universe as a thing apart. It is become almost a necessity of thought that we should look upon the recognizable organic life of biology as part of a continuity. We find it harder and harder to say precisely at what point organic life begins. The division between colloid chemistry and biochemistry is already imperceptible. The hypothesis that organic life forms an evolutionary continuity with the non-living has become steadily more inevitable in the hundred years which have elapsed since Goethe wrote that 'the truly scientific thinker sees plainly enough that he has to unite all phenomena under one universal conception, the conception of Life in the broadest sense: but for that very reason he will take all the more care to mark the difference between things which live in different ways.' No doubt it is scarcely warrantable to extend this conception beyond the earth itself. If we cannot avoid supposing that man is the final product of some pre-biological 'life' that includes all the constituents of Earth, we certainly have no right to leap to the inordinate conclusion that this pre-biological 'life' of earth which culminates in organic life and ultimately in man is the final purpose of the whole immeasurable and inscrutable universe of astronomy. What form existence may assume in the Milky Way is, I suppose, for ever beyond our knowledge. We read the few signs that reach us in accordance with our own private anthropocentric dictionary.

But whether the meaning we impute to them is indeed their real meaning passes conjecture.

Our life-long concern is with our existence upon Earth. Here we are imprisoned, and here we are free. The organic unity of this universe of ours is no such tremendous supposition as is the organic unity of the Universe at large. And, if we feel that we must concern ourselves deeply with the Universe at large, it is still more our duty to remember that it is only by knowing ourselves that we can determine how much we know, or are likely to know, about the greater Universe. If we can establish our position in that scheme wherein we actually do live and move and have our being, we shall be well on the way to such human wisdom as we can attain.

The scheme in which we see ourselves is, as Goethe said, a scheme of life 'in the broadest sense.' Life, in this sense, stirs invisibly, we may be sure, throughout the whole inorganic world. There is an organic sequence of pre-biological life, and biological life; to that sequence we now add metabiological life, which as we have tried to demonstrate, man has achieved and can achieve. Pre-biological, biological, metabiological – such is the sequence in this organic universe of ours.

What distinguishes the metabiological phase in the sequence is, first, that it is peculiar and proper to man. With man, so far as we can tell, first but not suddenly appeared in the sequence of biological life an element equally pregnant with potentialities of

organic achievement and of organic disruption, – namely, the inscrutable and indefinable mode of life which we call 'consciousness.' Wherein, precisely, this peculiar consciousness of man differs from the consciousness of the higher animals I leave it to others to presume to say. It seems to me quite probable that an intelligent visitor from another universe would find, as Keats did, little difference between the vast and busy congregation of humankind and a community of bees or ants. What we take to be the signs of conscious intelligence, he might take to be manifestations of instinct, save that he might have difficulty in believing that any works so seemingly ugly as many of the works of man could be the product of instinct. He would be inclined to suppose that some diabolical and perverting power had intervened to distort the instinctive process of life.

It would be ridiculous to maintain that the point in the organic process of Earth at which ugliness begins, is the point at which the specifically human consciousness emerges. Nature, when she had a free field, seems to have made a good deal of ugliness on her own. Most of us feel (though probably we are wrong) that, given the materials, we could have made a better job of the Diplodocus, or even of the Pterodactyl; so that we cannot say there is anything particularly *un*-natural in the uglinesses with which Man cumbers the earth. On the contrary, they are as natural (in the really valid sense of the word) as

anything else. A cretin is as natural as a Shakespeare; the Nurse Cavell monument as the Hermes of Praxiteles. The real peculiarity of the human consciousness is that it introduced an element which is able to observe these distressing discrepancies. With conscious man a further faculty of self-criticism entered into the organic process of earth-life.

Every crucial act in the long history of man, from the discovery of fire and tillage to the invention of the wheel and the creation of God, is an act of self-criticism by Nature. This self-criticism began by being half-conscious; man without thought, or ability to think, of the implications, was painfully at work to remedy the deficiencies of Nature with regard to himself, a part of Nature – therefore the deficiencies of Nature with regard to herself. What really went on in him during the epochs while he slowly hammered out the rudiments of a civilization was merely what had been going on in the æons before his emergence. He was only the instrument by which the self-criticism of Nature became more acute. It appears, from our standpoint, to have become quicker. But time depends upon the time-consciousness. To put our time-measurement back into the process as it was before man emerged from it is a fundamental mistake in proportion. What appears to us as an acceleration in the movement of self-criticism in Nature is only the movement becoming conscious of itself. Each successive crea-

tive act in the geological past belonged to the same order of self-criticism.

The emergent intelligence of man was likewise of the same order as the emergent wing of the rudimentary bird; it consisted in an emergent capacity to use things in order to protect the vehicle of the emergent capacity itself. This emergence of human intelligence was continuous with the secular process that preceded it, and is in essence indistinguishable from it. The tool made and handled by man, as Samuel Butler first clearly saw, is as much an intrinsic part of the human organism as the hands which make and manipulate it. Nor is there any point in the advance of intelligence at which the continuity of the process is broken. The supreme artistic and intellectual creations of man are as intrinsic to his organic evolution as was the first handy stone which the Neanderthaler banged about into an eolith; so are the innumerable forgotten stupidities which he has created with the same gusto as his masterpieces. The difference between the stupidities and the masterpieces is simply that the latter have served the ends of life. The masterpiece is an organ which has maintained itself in the vast organic experiment; on the whole the stupidities tend to become rudimentary and disappear.

§ 2

It is in such a context that we must regard the fact

of consciousness. It is a name for a peculiar modality manifest in man of the inherent organic urge towards newness. The point at which human intelligence and human emotion differentiate themselves from animal instinct is not determinable, for the simple reason that the progress from the one to the other has been an organic sequence. And the truest way to regard human intelligence and human emotion is to regard them directly as manifestations of animal instinct, as Keats regarded them in the passage we have quoted.

The most abstract speculations of the intelligence derive directly from the same impulse to manipulate external objects and to make them intrinsic to the organism which impelled the erect Pithecanthropus to assimilate a convenient stone. The part played by symbolic language in this strange evolution was prodigious. Instead of things themselves, sounds. No wonder that in the primitive mind, to possess the name was to possess power over the thing. By symbolic language man manipulated and assimilated the world. He made it organic to himself: he infinitely extended his own field of existence, and security.

But a moment came when this accelerated process of organic assimilation received a check. The world known was known as hostile to the knower. It was known as a world of pain, and terror, and accident – an unassimilable world. God was invented to make it assimilable once more. The unaccountable was focussed into one point of fathomless inscrutability.

But at last God also proved unassimilable. Man demanded that God should be as good as himself.

For capacities of 'goodness' had arisen in man. He had learned that two men need not necessarily fear each other; they could trust each other, and defend themselves the more securely thereby. The mother protected her offspring and the father protected them both. Security was the bliss of the primitive world, the halcyon moment in the incessant surge of fear. Security, which men could grant within a little ambit, God must grant within a great one. The order which men painfully created about them, God must uphold in all things. Yet they suffered; as peoples, pestilence and defeat; as men, sickness and death. Since order there must be, they had done wrong: they had sinned against God. They looked for the sins, and they found them. There was plenty to find; and God got the credit for man's striving towards newness. At every stage man's progress towards inward order was projected into God.

It was inevitable that at some point or other God should thus be endowed with virtues which, though achieved in the individual, were not manifest in the ordering of the world. The great question of Job was put. If the just man suffers, where is the justice of God? The vain appeal was heard for the evidence of moral order in the world. And that appeal, it is clear, could never be more than temporarily satisfied. For the simple fact was that man was for ever passing beyond the God whom he had created;

until the moment came when, in the rare emergent individual, man was higher and nobler, juster and more loving, than any credible author of the world-order could be. In short, if God was to be credible at all, if he was to continue to serve his purpose of making the human universe assimilable, the time had come when a man must be God.

He appeared: the just and loving man who was killed for his justice and his love. Men were on the verge of adoring a reality. But they glanced the full shock aside by resurrecting the dead hero, and making his resurrection the guarantee of their own. Still, the suffering God was a tremendous creation; it came nearer to the truth of things than any religious imagination had done before: nearer than any of the sublime speculations of the Greeks. The difference between a suffering God and a world in travail of its own perfection is very small; perhaps, if we have regard to the necessity of metaphor, none at all.

Essentially, this amazing evolution of religion was the effort of man to find order in the world of his experience. It was the condition of order in himself. And that effort to find order in the world of his experience was, in origin, an effort to assimilate the world. Nor did it ever change its nature. The highest religious intuition reveals, to patient contemplation, the same primeval impulse to incorporate the world organically to man. Jesus descends directly from the Pithecanthropus who first grasped the stone, and incorporated it organically to himself.

We have tried to show how Jesus veritably did incorporate the world to himself, by means of an immediate experience of the biological unity of life. Immediate experience of that kind was the only way available to him of obtaining the conviction that he needed. Not till eighteen hundred years after him, not until Goethe enunciated his surmises, was any radically different way of obtaining that knowledge open to men*. Men strove to discover the order of science. But the bases of their science were bound to give them a world order which they could not incorporate into themselves. A mechanistic universe demands a mechanistic man to know it. The fundamental effort of Jesus, strange though the claim may sound to the man of science, was in truth more scientific. No less than the effort of science it was an effort to discover a universal order. But unlike science it began with the assumption that the order of the universe must be of the same kind as the order in man. Science assumed that the order in

*It might be said that the peculiar Christian 'revelation' which supervenes upon a contemplation of the agony of Jesus is a radically different method of obtaining this knowledge. In so far as the revelation is mediated, not immediate, there is a difference. The Christian 'revelation' is a very pure form of the tragic 'satisfaction', finding expression in supernatural categories. But the difference between it and the mystical experience is not radical. On the contrary, it conforms exactly to the pattern of the mystical experience, of which the Christian contemplation is, indeed, a remarkable systematization.

man must be of the same kind as the order in the universe.

Both were assumptions. But the assumption of Jesus had this in its favour; that, whatever the universal order might prove to be, man was a product and part of it. When Jesus demanded that the pattern of the Universe should be like the pattern of himself, he could not be wholly wrong. He alone knew the order of that part of the universal order which was himself. That knowledge he would not surrender. It was irreconcilable with his knowledge of the world: still, he would not surrender it. The discord was terrible, ultimate; still, he would not yield. Consciousness broke under the strain, and the unity which is beneath consciousness possessed him. He was right after all. The order of the world *was* of the same kind as the order in himself. A scientific discovery if ever there was one: confirmed by experiment and valid to this day.

The assumption of science was not so firmly based: and it was an unconscious assumption. The assumption was that the order in man was of the same kind as the order in the universe. That was well enough: but unfortunately this universe did not include man. Since man was left out of it at the beginning, he could not get into it at the end. All that could get into it in the shape or semblance of a man was an automaton. The fact was that the universe of science simply was not the universe. To-day men of science are beginning to discover it; some to

acknowledge it publicly, to the great distress of their colleagues. But Goethe told them so a hundred years ago: the universal order is not logical, nor scientific, but biological.

Man can incorporate the universe to himself, or himself to the universe; which is the same thing. That is what Jesus discovered, and what many men following him have discovered. The discovery has been formulated in many ways, but its practical effect has always been the same. There is a self-integration. The biological organism which is man becomes an organism on a higher level. Consciousness becomes not merely formally, but actually, organic to the human being. Intelligence and emotion cease from their disruptive autonomy, and merge into organic consciousness. Through this metabiological organism Life can create, without hindrance, her own pure and inscrutable newness.

It is, in short, man's privilege and burden that he alone among organisms must learn, slowly and painfully, to be an organism. The aim of human life, once posited in these simple terms, seems obvious. Yet how difficult of attainment it is! Religion had its method: Man was to do the will of God. But man found it too difficult to do the will of God. He needed to know what it was; he must have rules to tell him. But the will of God that is known beforehand ceases to be the will of God. The will of God is that which a man does when he has learned to be, and actually is, an organism.

4

VALUE AS VARIATION

§ 1

METABIOLOGY is biology into which what are known as 'values' are organically incorporated. The endeavour to lift 'values' out of the continuity of the organic process of the Universe, though it is in some sense a necessity of thought, is mistaken. By hypostatizing Truth, Beauty and Goodness and God who includes them, into 'eternal values,' we make them finally unreal. There are, and can be, no eternal and absolute 'values.' But to conclude from this that 'values' have no reality is a far more serious error. Mechanistic science is less *true* than Christianity.

'Value' is creative newness in the organic process of the universe; more than this, it is creative newness which maintains itself. And this self-maintenance of creative newness must necessarily be measured, not by the life of the biological individual, but by the life of the whole. The creative newness of Jesus was inevitably death to the biological individual, but it was Life to the process as a whole. It became the focus of centuries of conscious and unconscious effort in successive generations of men: a new type had arisen, to which according to their metabiological potentialities a succession of individuals

responded. The activity of such response is what distinguishes metabiological from biological process; metabiological process is biological process into which response to 'value' has been, as we have said, organically incorporated. The necessity of this incorporation, once seen, is obvious. There can be no true Science of life which does not accept it.

To establish the facts of metabiological response is the work of history; to establish the cause is the work of psychology. The outstanding metabiological response in the epoch of which we are the immediate heirs has been the response to Jesus. He has been the supreme embodiment of 'value' for nearly two thousand years. Since 'value' is, in our view, simply attached to the object of continuous metabiological response, this is really a tautology. The distinction between objects of 'value' which are or were living, and objects of 'value' which are dead, is an irrelevant and unessential distinction. 'Values' are always organic in origin. A poem or a temple which maintains itself as an object of metabiological response was once the organic extension of its creator, no less inherent to himself as biological individual than the fingers of his hand; its 'value' consists simply in its power to maintain itself as an object of response. This power to maintain itself as object of metabiological response appears to depend upon its creative newness, by which it gives life a new possibility of expression. But this account may be tautology. The main point is that human response to value is

only a particular case of organic response to organic variation in the evolutionary process.

Evidently, then, in the metabiological mode, the completest and most influential variation is a whole human life of a new kind. This is the greatest of all 'works of art,' not by metaphor, but in actual fact, and recognized to be such by some of the great masters of art themselves. He who would write a great poem, said Milton, must be himself a true poem. Let witness also the marvellous life of John Keats.

But it is evidently impossible that a human life should manifest creative newness in life alone. Utterance is no less life than action, indeed no less action than action. The sayings of Jesus are as creatively new as his life; they are an organic and integral part of the creative newness of his living; and indeed at this point of time they are the sole irrefutable evidence of the reality of the creative newness of his living. It is through his utterance alone, whatever the Church may claim, that successive generations have made their organic contact with the new man that he was, and their metabiological response to him in his utterance has been such that they have been able to find a valid meaning in the dogma of his bodily resurrection. He was, and is, living. His metabiological life is manifest in the continuity of response to him. Nor is metabiological life, life only by abuse of metaphor. It is veritably life, the necessary, implicit, and organic extension of

the biological life which has, quite unwarrantably, monopolized the name of 'life.' The metabiological life of Jesus is simply his life within the organic process of the whole.

This extraordinary and (in the Western world) unique achievement of posthumous metabiological life by Jesus is, in reality, due to one single cause, namely his own deliberately sought and completely conquered re-integration into the organic life of the whole. This process, as it was manifested in him, we have already described sufficiently. He was a man who was able, by the peculiar intensity and integrity of his psychological development, to give a true and just significance to an immediate experience of the biological unity of life: it became for him, as it veritably is, the basis and warrant for a conviction of the metabiological unity of life. Life was, he knew, to be obeyed, and to be obeyed willingly, even to death; and the life which was to be obeyed was not some figment of the intellect, not some mere Life-force which gives us all the excuse for doing merely what we want to do, but life as it came to self-awareness and act in the unity of himself, a strange new creature with a new delicacy of sensibility and a new passionate instinct to live and to understand. The unity of himself, the new man Jesus, whose newness alone had brought him to the point of knowing the possibility, the necessity, and the reality of his own unity, was the life which he had to obey. The cost of obeying it was so fearful that

there were moments when the unity almost broke under the sheer pain of its own destiny. But it re-established itself, and went its way to the end. The new life had been achieved, and inevitably it took its place as the chief focus of all ensuing metabiological life, to this day.

His metaphors, it may be, have lost their meaning. But that is, and can be, only a temporary phase. They will regain their meaning, among those who understand that they must necessarily have been metaphors. If they had not been metaphors, they would long ago have ceased to be true. Metaphor, which has no fixed meaning, alone is true to human experience which is change and creation. The science that imagines it can be comprehensive without metaphor is utterly deceived; and the religion that refuses to acknowledge its metaphors is irrecoverably dead. It has surrendered its heritage of metabiological life for the mere continuity of biological existence. It has become reversion.

§ 2

'Values,' as we have said, must be regarded as integral to the universal organic process in which they emerge. They cannot be, except at the cost of a final self-deception, permanently detached from it and set in a realm of their own. The hypostatization of 'values' is at best only an expedient of thought, which must be corrected by replacing them in the

organic continuity. Only then shall we clearly see that 'values' are always 'values for life.' No other kind of 'value' is conceivable. But the 'life' to which 'values' have immediate reference is not the same as biological life. The aim of biological life is self-perpetuation; the aim of the metabiological life to which 'values' have reference is creative newness. Yet biological life and metabiological life cannot be separated: they are truly continuous. Every manifestation of true creative newness attracts to itself the conscious attention of those subsequent individuals who are capable of responding to it. Their endeavour to understand the new phenomenon is their endeavour to assimilate, and by assimilating, to maintain it in existence. The process is strictly biological, but it cannot be contained in the category of the biological as it is used to-day. Hence our use of the term, 'metabiological.' Implicit in our use of the word is the theory that 'values' which maintain themselves – the 'values' which do not maintain themselves are not, and are never called 'values' – are organic facts of the same intrinsic order as variations which maintain themselves in the evolutionary process.

The historical concentration of 'values' in Jesus is simply the recognition of his extraordinary significance as a variation. This 'recognition,' as we have tried to show, is only a name for organic response, and has been operative not merely upon the intellect, but equally upon the emotion and the will of

mankind. The multifarious forms which this organic response has assumed are of the utmost interest to the student of metabiology; but the broad truth about them is that for many centuries the effort to account for this unique organic response made necessary a distinction between natural and supernatural, between the act and realm of knowledge and the act and realm of faith. This was inevitable. The organic response to the metabiological phenomenon of Jesus was a fact; yet there were no categories of thought to hold it. Perchance, had a truer version of the thought of Aristotle, with its fundamental conception of a dynamic and creative 'Nature' universally at work, been available to the Schoolmen, the category might have been found. But it was not found. And when Science assumed its autonomy, and severed itself from Theology, the categories of thought were temporarily, but very seriously, impoverished. The Natural and Supernatural of Theology did, after a fashion, cover the actual whole of human experience; the natural of Science did not. Therein lies the indubitable element of truth in the contentions of those who, to-day, plead for a revival of Thomist theology and a return to Catholicism. But it is manifest that the true remedy for the inadequacy of scientific naturalism to human experience is not, and cannot be, a reversion to supernaturalism; it must lie in a genuine extension of naturalism. A veritable and thorough-going Naturalism is indicated as the goal.

Such a thorough-going Naturalism is being outlined in these pages. Owing to the author's limitations, its exposition is restricted in the main to the consideration of one crucial fact of human history; but the exposition is thus restricted in the full conviction that the method and the standpoint is applicable to the whole of human experience and the whole of human history. Once we recognize the continuity of the biological and the metabiological and the nature of the organic responses which manifest themselves in the metabiological realm, the organic and self-creative unity of the terrestrial universe is evident.

This organic and self-creative unity of the whole of human experience and human history, it is maintained, is such as itself to compel an organic response. It must either be completely ignored or completely accepted. An organic response, relatively to human nature, is one in which intellect and emotion and will are equally participant and equally satisfied. This complete Naturalism, therefore, should have the effect of precluding that extreme conflict between intellect and emotion, and the consequent paralysis of the will, upon which the mystical experience has been shown to supervene. It seems to do away with the necessity of so violent a method of self-integration, by effecting a synthesis wholly through consciousness. Possibly there is, in this expectation, an element of self-delusion. We are compelled by such a Naturalism as we are trying to expound, to acknow-

ledge the organic sequence of our own experience. It was necessary, if the conclusions here indicated are sound, that this book should have begun with an autobiography; and the crucial part played by a mystical experience in that autobiography is evident. It may be, therefore, that the path to this complete naturalism still lies through the mystical experience.

That I should be sorry indeed to believe; and yet this vital question is, strangely enough (or very obviously), impossible for me to decide. There is an alternative which I naturally prefer to entertain. It is that the combination of mystical experience and a congenital intellectualism such as mine, happens to be rare. This fortuitous rarity is the sole reason why I have been able, as I believe, to give the true explanation of the mystical experience. The explanation is wholly naturalistic, in the sense of a complete Naturalism; that is, it explains at once the biological cause, and the metabiological value, of that experience.

Now precisely what has hitherto been lacking to every attempt at a complete Naturalism is a valid explanation of the mystical experience. In the mystical experience, the God-defenders of to-day dig their last trench; before the mystical experience the scientific 'naturalists' capitulate. If we have been able to bring the mystical experience, without distortion or diminution, into harmony with a complete Naturalism, we may by an accident of

experience have been able to succeed where others have failed.

In this crucial matter of the mystical experience, we have been able at once to decline the transcendental and the pragmatic interpretation. The One of immediate experience is not a transcendental Unity; it is the unity of biological being. The value which attaches to that experience is not a pragmatic value; it is not that it enables the recipient to behave *as if* there were an ultimate Unity. It enables him, on the contrary, to behave as an integral part of an ultimate Unity that is real. Of course, it is easy to cavil at this blundering language, and to object that, if there is an ultimate biological unity, every man must inevitably be an integral part of it. That is true enough. But for *man* to be an integral part of the biological unity involves that he should become conscious of himself as an integral part of it. In other words, the biological unity of man must also be metabiological.

This metabiological unity of man is organic, creative, and emergent. As value it is objective and real. It is the variation of proved maximum significance in the organic evolution of the whole during the period which most nearly concerns us. What will come after is not our business. Our duty is simply to help it to come; and our method of doing our duty is to maintain the variation in ourselves, by achieving our own metabiological unity. Only thus can we secure ourselves against the danger of

becoming rudimentary or reversional in the organic process of the whole. We must become the vehicles, not of life's self-perpetuation, but of Life's self-creation.

5

THE SCIENCE OF LIFE

§ 1

MANIFESTLY, the conditions of the achievement of metabiological unity with respect to ourselves, at this point of time, are essentially the same as the conditions of its achievement in others, at other points of time. Metabiological unity is a harmony of all the faculties of man. But the accidental differences are obvious. The faculties of man change; and chiefly his intellect. It is evident that any past metabiological unity, simply because it is past, cannot be a theme for imitation. In actual fact, such imitation is excluded by the nature of organic response, for where response is truly organic imitation is impossible.

Metabiological unity is, therefore, always new, not new only in respect to the experience of its subject, but new in the organic process of the whole. The elements of which it is the creative synthesis are always different, and one of them, namely the intellect, progressive. That does not involve me in the absurd necessity of supposing that I have a better intellect than Aristotle; it is simply the statement of the fact that the intellects of many great men have accumulated a corpus of systematized fact which is available to me. The acknowledgment of this

accumulated truth is necessary for me. To deny or to burke it would make any harmony of the faculties to which I might pretend a mere illusion. My metabiological unity must include all the knowledge of which I am capable.

I am not committed to blind acceptance; I reserve my right of criticism. Above all, I stick to the facts of my own experience. I am as certainly a part of the Universe as anything which science explores, and I know myself at least as well as science knows its Universe. What is more, through my knowledge of myself, I know a rich succession of personalities in the world's history; who, again, are an intrinsic part of the Universe. Mechanistic science has nothing whatever that is relevant to tell me about these. Actually, it ignores them completely. The Universe to which they belong is a quite different Universe from that with which it is concerned. At most, in some small and unimportant respects it is the same. Shakespeare was obedient to the laws of gravitation, or the generalized theory of Relativity; but so was his dog, if he had one, which is improbable. The Shakespeare about whom mechanistic science can give me information is indistinguishable, except as a space-time event, from the table at which he wrote.

Evidently, I need not worry too much about science. I have no difficulty in accepting its Universe, though not as ultimate; but it would have a tremendous difficulty in accepting mine, or me. In the universe of physics, there is no room even for a

physicist, except in the meagre quality of a space-time event. I am a space-time event myself; I can neither be puffed-up, nor depressed about it. I am also a human being, and that is very much more important. The Universe which is a reality must have room for me, the self-knowing and other-knowing human being.

The sciences which vaguely and gingerly concern themselves with the Universe of which I, as known to myself, am a part, are doubtful sciences. They are Biology, Psychology, Anthropology, Palæontology, Ethnology and the rest. None of them are exact; none of them approach very near to the Universe to which I belong. Psychology comes nearest; unfortunately, though it has been vastly extended of late by a few men of genius, it is in a condition of chaos. The one clear and coherent theory that emerges from the vortex – *rari nantes in gurgite vasto* – is the Freudian theory that the fundamental reality of the human being is the sexual urge. That is interesting and valuable; in a sense it reintegrates the human being into a biological unity: it emphasizes the continuity of Biology and Psychology. But it is singularly inadequate to the Universe of which I am a part. All that is specifically human it casts away. If I grant, as I might be well prepared to do, that the fundamental reality in human personality is the sexual urge, I receive no answer at all to my immediate question: Why does this simple and primary thing assume these extraor-

dinary manifestations? Sex-urge is one thing, the life of Michael Faraday quite another. That the primal urge entered into and helped to condition that life is acceptable to reason; but that the life, with its achievements, its sacrifices, and its convictions, can be thus explained is manifestly absurd.

A psychologist like Dr. Jung of Zurich, who is aware of the inadequacy of the sexual theory, and is consequently compelled to enlarge the conception of the primal urge, is condemned to struggle for ever and in vain with his own Protean monster, the *Libido*. *Libido* is everything, and responsible for everything. Not that this is untrue. But it is anarchy. Values once more disappear into the biological flux. The truth of the matter is that modern psychology is, as yet, by no means as adequate to the facts of human experience as the traditional psychology of Christianity. What is strange is that modern psychology has hitherto made no serious attempt to incorporate into itself the findings of Christain psychology. This is, perhaps, the most deplorable example of that deliberate breach of continuity in science, of which we have already spoken. That psychology, of all sciences, should imagine that it can follow the exact sciences in their rejection of religion is, when soberly considered, an astonishing manifestation of the 'false-naturalistic' prejudice. Than such naturalism nothing could be less natural. It would not be excessive to say that the chief need of modern psychology is to deal faithfully

with the facts of religious experience, and to establish firmly its own genuine equivalents for the conceptions and entities of religion. Until it squarely faces this task, it will continue to be a chaos.

Inevitably, therefore, this book makes a small beginning with the work of transposing the findings of religious psychology into their equivalents in the organic scheme of a complete Naturalism. The advised reader who is not altogether ignorant of the conceptions of Christian psychology (and no advised reader has the right to be thus ignorant) will have no great difficulty in distinguishing what are the correlates to those conceptions in our scheme. If the scheme of an organic universe did not provide real equivalents for those well-tried conceptions, it would be so much the worse for the scheme. Nothing could be more evidently fatal to its truth than a failure to maintain the continuity of Christian wisdom. If, for example, it could provide no equivalent to the dogma of Original Sin, its claim to acceptance would be slight indeed. Not that those Orthodox churchmen who believe in the factual truth of Original Sin will be satisfied with our equivalent for it; on the contrary, they are bound to be pained by it. For Original Sin is the tendency to biological reversion. To so much they might agree. But Original Sin is necessarily also metabiological reversion: and to be Orthodox is to be guilty of it in no small degree. Biological reversion and metabiological reversion are continuous one with another.

The possibilities and forms of biological and metabiological reversion necessarily change with the ages. To be Orthodox in the great age of Orthodoxy was not to be guilty of metabiological reversion; far from it, it was at the worst to maintain metabiological continuity, at the best to assert metabiological newness. But so soon as Orthodoxy required that man should, in the interests of his metabiological unity (or soul), forgo that full exercise of his intellect which is a metabiological necessity, it ceased to be a method of achieving metabiological creation, and became an instrument of metabiological reversion. In short, the great home of Original Sin is the Catholic Church. Were it not that it flourishes very considerably and much more crudely in the ranks of the men of 'science,' one would be tempted to say that the Catholic Church had, appropriately, achieved a monopoly both of the dogma, and of the reality, of Original Sin.

These incidental delights of Metabiology, the malicious pleasure of turning the great traditional conceptions of the Christian Church against the institution which chiefly maintains them, may be left to my successors, if I have any. That Metabiology should be capable of affording these delights is necessary, if it is true. For every 'supernatural' truth of Catholicism, Metabiology must have its truly natural counterpart, in relation to which as metabiological verity belief in the corresponding supernatural truth of Catholicism is metabiological

reversion. After all, it is time that Orthodoxy was encountered by a scheme as comprehensive as itself. No one has studied, or been tempted by, Orthodoxy (and study and temptation come to much the same thing) without admiring its completeness, without envying the facility with which it could place and classify his own particular hesitation or weakness. All other methods of classification seemed, and were, so hopelessly crude, so painfully parochial, so patently ridiculous. '*Hoc est corpus meum*,' at moments, seemed a small price, after all, to pay for that tremendous classification. But 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' What universal scheme can compensate a man for the sacrifice of his metabiological unity? It is comforting to have achieved, by maintaining metabiological unity, a universal scheme of our own, and to be able to classify the classifiers. Not that we bear them malice. No one who adopts our perspective can dare to be less than grateful to Orthodoxy. Its standard of comprehensiveness was the one we had to satisfy, if we were not to be, in its eyes and our own, merely the authors of a new heresy. Instead, we are the authors of a new Orthodoxy: *Quod nunquam, quod nullibi, quod a nemine.*

§ 2

That is a presumptuous way of putting things; but since, from the same angle, the whole of this book is

one immense presumption, a small incidental presumption is immaterial. And this one helps to clear the issue. For any book which attempts to do what this book attempts to do must, implicitly if not openly, claim to be as comprehensive as Orthodoxy, and more adequate to the facts of human experience. It is, of course, manifestly ridiculous that one 'debile minister' should claim to create the equivalent of a system elaborated by innumerable master-minds over many centuries. The claim is simply that, implicit in the system of this book, is a system as coherent as Orthodoxy, and more true.

Naturally, the claim is not that this system is likely to be practically efficacious for so many people as Orthodoxy even now is. It is not for everyman. (No more, for that matter, is Orthodoxy itself.) If it were for everyman, it would necessarily belie its own nature and contradict its own doctrine. It is for the man who elects to be completely conscious, and is prepared to take complete responsibility for himself. Orthodoxy, as Dostoevsky saw, is one majestic system for the delegation of responsibility.

No doubt, the vast majority of men and women will still seek some means of delegating responsibility for themselves to others. There is nothing reprehensible in that: it is probably a law of life just as the wife delegates her responsibility to the husband. But even amongst those who are inclined to delegate responsibility for themselves, there is a profound change. They are, for the most part, no longer

inclined to delegate it to the priest. They do not believe. The number of persons alive to-day in search of something or someone to whom to delegate responsibility for themselves must be tremendous. Hence the pullulation of new 'religions,' of which the only sensible thing to say is that, if men and women must have a religion, they had better go to Orthodoxy. Assuredly, they will not find a truer one. The new 'religions' are painful to contemplate except as a symptom that the religious impulse is deep-rooted and needs satisfaction.

With the adherents of bad new 'religions' we have no concern; even less than with the adherents of the good old one. We are concerned for those who delegate responsibility for themselves to the psychologist, and with the psychologists to whom they delegate the responsibility. The background of modern psychiatry is chaos. One of our incidental aims is to offer it a coherent one. If it does not recognize the need, so much the worse for it. The psychological doctor who presumes to meddle with the dynamics of an educated human being, without having a coherent view of that universe in which the educated human being is an integral part, – a universe in which human 'values' are objectively grounded – is a charlatan: first, because it is impossible that a man who is not himself truly integrated can show the way to self-integration to another, and without such a world-view he cannot himself be integrated; and, secondly, because there is no

possibility of integrating his patient unless he can put before him such a coherent world-view. To tinker with souls without knowing what you are doing, without knowing or caring to know whether you have the right to do what you are doing at all, is an offence. If psychology is to take upon itself the responsibility of religion, it must make itself the true equivalent of religion. It must have its 'theology.'

If that sounds nonsense to the psychologist, he should give up his profession; for he is surely incompetent for it. If, on the other hand, he detects some glimmering of sense in the dictum, he must admit that it is impossible that psychology should make itself the equivalent of religion, unless it first sets itself to understand what religion is. That is the most important, and most urgent task before modern psychology. Not that it is a task for psychology alone; it is equally incumbent upon any mind which can rise to the conception of a necessary continuity in human evolution. Anyone who wishes to understand human history must understand religion; and since no one can really understand himself except he understands human history, the effort to understand religion is incumbent upon all who seek self-knowledge. But psychology is especially concerned. Half-consciously it has drifted or been pushed into the position of religion: it undertakes most of the duties, and assumes most of the responsibilities, which were for many centuries undertaken and

assumed by religion. It must either rise consciously to the full height of the responsibility it has unconsciously assumed, or be definitely relegated to the realm of quackery and pseudo-science.

It would be hard for me to decide which is the greater: the contempt which I feel for most of what passes for modern psychology, or the confidence which I feel in the potentialities of modern psychology if its responsibilities are truly accepted. A few days ago I heard one of the most famous English psychologists declare that his only hope was in 'the conditioned reflexes.' Such a confession of impotence and stupidity would be incredible, had it not been actually made. Yet it is probable that the majority of modern psychiatrists, were they equally honest, would have to make the same confession, or its equivalent. For all that it really means is that modern psychology reposes on a foundation of false 'naturalism' – that is to say, a foundation of mechanistic determinism. On such a foundation no psychology at all is possible. The mechanistic universe of false 'naturalism' is a universe from which the experiencing subject was omitted at its inception. In other words, it is a universe which excludes the subject-matter of psychology. To imagine that the only hope of psychology lies in conceptions derived from that universe is an imagination to which only a Swift could do justice. We are sadly in need of a modern scientific Laputa.

This imbecility will continue until psychology

awakes to the simple necessity of its own continuity with religion. Of famous modern psychologists, the only one who has in some sort recognized the necessity is Dr. Jung of Zurich. It would be unjust and ungrateful to criticize him; nevertheless it must be pointed out as an indication of even his fundamental confusion, that his investigations into religious concepts are restricted to the religions with which a creative psychology to-day must be least concerned. It is not primitive religion with which Psychology is continuous but advanced religion, and above all with religion in the form which for fifteen hundred years satisfied the dynamic aspirations and formed the consciousness of Western man. This modern passion for the reduction of complex and subtle manifestations of human life to the primitive and undifferentiated is nothing less than a disease, of which the popularity of Herr Otto's book on 'The Holy' is a striking example. That Christian apologists should hail with relief a thesis which establishes their religion, and any other, upon primeval instinct, is eloquent of their own poverty of conviction. Values have disappeared into the flux. The Christian religion is true because it satisfies an instinct! So does fornication.

The reduction of the complex differentiations of human life to origins in instinct is one of those half-truths that are far more dangerous than a downright lie. It is true enough that all the differentiations of human life have arisen from instinct, or whatever

name we choose to give to the biological unity of the animal: it is true, and it is meaningless. What is significant is that variations have arisen, and that some of these variations have had, and have still, 'value.' What 'value' means we have tried to show: it is the name given to the variations which have maintained themselves by evoking continuous response. A book that is read for centuries is variation that has maintained itself; it has 'value.' A life that is worshipped and followed for centuries is a variation that has maintained itself: it has value. To understand human life is to understand why these variations have maintained themselves. To reiterate with a bemused obsession that all these variations, and innumerable others which have not maintained themselves, arose out of pre-human and purely biological life, is not to understand human life at all, it is, on the contrary, to shut oneself off from understanding it. Any fool can see that human life has its biological origin and biological substrate. He does not become a wise man by repeating it in any one of its thousand modern forms.

The true science of human life is a science of 'values.' We have tried to show how 'values' must be regarded. They belong to a class of absolutely objective phenomena – namely, to the class of variations in the evolutionary process which maintain themselves. That a variation should maintain itself means simply that to this variation there is continuous organic response during the period under inspection.

The real 'values' of humanity during a given period are determined simply by establishing which variations have maintained themselves. Thus, if we observe that the cunning and successful rascal is actually just as prevalent and just as much an object for imitation to-day as he was in the Middle Ages, we conclude that this variation is as much a real 'value' for modern man as any of his more pretentious ones. That the quality of 'value' is not generally attached to him by a civilized person is an important fact to be given due weight; but it cannot diminish the reality of the 'value' of the cunning and successful rascal.

Distinguished among these impersonal 'values,' though belonging to precisely the same order of phenomena, are the personal 'values.' These are the variations to which any given individual responds. For the given individual there will be a distinction between the variations to which he 'chooses' to respond, and the variations to which he actually responds; and quite often he will be conscious only of the former 'deliberate' response, and unconscious of the latter. That condition of semi-ignorance of his own 'values' is one which the mature individual has to overcome. All his actual 'values' should become conscious. But of that matter also we shall speak subsequently.

What are, in the common language of the day, distinguished as 'values' are the qualities of those variations to which the individual consciously and

deliberately responds. The variations themselves are absolutely objective; the choice he makes from among them is absolutely personal. But among these variations to which the individual personally responds there will be many (indeed, most of them) to which a whole succession of individuals have responded before him. Previous generations have striven to maintain nearly all the variations which he is striving to maintain; for a response to a variation is the same thing as a striving to perpetuate it.

An important part of what we have called Metabiology is the science of 'values' thus regarded. In its most objective form the science of 'values' is a description of the variations which actually have been perpetuated during a given period. To describe those variations with a serene accuracy is its aim at this level. But the accuracy must be impartial. The 'higher' and 'nobler' variations must receive the same dispassionate scrutiny as the 'lower' and 'baser'; and this, unfortunately, our modern science is incapable of giving. The choice which are the 'higher' and which are the 'lower' variations is a personal matter; that choice is simply the record of the variations to which the individual investigator consciously responds. But it will always be found that the variations to which he responds have been responded to by generations before him. They have decided that these variations shall be reckoned 'high' or 'low.' Actually it does not matter which they are; the 'high-low' description is metaphor. What

matters is that there has been response and perpetuation in the past, and that in the individual there is response and perpetuation now. These are facts, absolutely objective; 'highness' and 'lowness' are not facts of this order. The facts with regard to 'highness' and 'lowness' are simply that such descriptions of variations are themselves variations. The 'high' value is simply a name which has been given to the variation to which there is in any individual acknowledged and conscious response; the 'low' is simply a name given to the variation to which the individual consciously refuses to respond. Conscious response, conscious refusal to respond; deliberate perpetuation, deliberate refusal to perpetuate – these are the facts concerning 'values.'

We do not degrade 'values'; we make them real. They are as real as the variations in which they have emerged and the variations in which they have been perpetuated. They are real 'out there' in the process of history. They are real also in the subject who determines to perpetuate them in himself. We may describe a 'value' then as a significant metabiological variation, with this conscious caveat. First, that we are perfectly aware that 'significant' begs the question; we ascribe 'significance' to these variations to which we personally are conscious of responding. If other people do not like our choice of the significant variations, we cannot help it; we simply recognize that we ourselves are not 'significant variation' for them. We only insist that the variations which we

call significant, have been found significant by others. They also have responded to these variations as we respond to them. And that continuity of response which is maintained in ourselves is a fact, which even those who do not like our choice must accept as a fact. The second caveat is that a metabiological variation is quite simply a biological variation. We call it a metabiological variation only because Biology is at present unable to recognize it. The metabiological variation represented by Friedrich Nietzsche is just as much a biological fact as the first enterprising Dover sole that slipped its eyes round the corner.

'Values,' thus regarded, are incapable of being hypostatized, that is to say, separated from the metabiological variations in which they emerge or are perpetuated; they cannot be, except as a temporary expedient of thought, lifted out of the organic process in which alone they are real. Obviously, that does not mean that they have not been so detached. They have. The Christian religion is full of such detachment of 'values': indeed, no religion, in the accepted sense of the word, is possible without such detachment. But the peculiarity and greatness of the Christian religion is that it has never allowed such detachment to become complete. It has never completely surrendered its hold of the historical Jesus, the incarnate 'value,' biologically emergent. This unique combination of the hypostatized value with the recognition of the incarnate

and embodied 'value' is what has given the Christian religion its own unique 'value' in the historical process; it embodies the transition from the hypostatized value to the incarnate value. It was a very great and a very necessary religion, which men ignore at their peril.

'Values' are always incarnate and embodied; the 'value' that is not incarnate is simply not a 'value.' The hypostatization and detachment of 'values' from the organic process in which they emerge is an error. But it has been a necessary error. That is plain, if we consider that to hypostatize and detach a value is, for the mind which performs the operation, an embodiment and incarnation of the value. If 'values' are only real to me on condition they are eternal, then my only way of incarnating them is to believe they are eternal. That is, it is true, a shortcoming of mine, due to the fact that I have suffered my intellect to become preponderant. My metabiological unity is imperfect, so that I can only respond to the significant variation (which is the value) in one particular and incomplete way. But my very act of hypostatization is my recognition of the necessity I am under to respond to the 'value' which has emerged. For me it is only possible to embody it by means of my intellect. I subserve the organic process as best I can.

Every act of knowledge, as we have said, is an endeavour after organic assimilation. To dissociate and detach the 'value' from what Goethe called the

'pure phenomenon' is, indeed, to make ultimate assimilation impossible. Once 'values' are detached, by the operation of intellect, from the significant variation in which they inhere and which they are, they can never be re-integrated into the pure phenomenon again. The universe is irrevocably divided into the realm of the pure Idea – the home of transcendent and hypostatized values – and the actual world of imperfect and blundering embodiment. The problem of pain and evil becomes radical and insoluble. To detach 'values' from the pure phenomena is, in the final issue, to be driven to reject the universe that is. This is the Original Sin of the human intellect. It can only be redeemed by a painful working back to the pure phenomenon once more, and a deep inward recognition that in the act of knowing the pure phenomenon the intellect is not supreme. This knowledge, which is the only pure and uncontaminated knowledge we humans have, is a response of the organism as a metabiological whole.

§ 3

Religion, in the accepted sense of the word, we have said, depends upon the hypostatization of values: that is, their detachment from the significant variations in which they emerge, and which they are. God is the focus in which the whole galaxy of detached values is concentrated. This God is necessarily unreal: he is an intellectual and imaginative

fiction, necessary, as we have tried to show, as a medium for intellectual response to the variations in which the values he incorporates once actually emerged. He is a means for securing values against their disappearance into the biological flux, and for enabling men, at a certain level of metabiological development to incorporate those values in themselves.

The great religious innovators tend to hypostatize the values emergent in themselves. Jesus endowed God with the virtues which he supereminently possessed; it was his unconscious effort to secure the value which was himself against the biological disruption which was inevitable. Similarly Plato, whose part in the formation of Christianity was second only to that of Jesus himself. As Jesus hypostatized Love, so Plato hypostatized the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. But they were not so actually emergent in himself as Love in Jesus. Plato founded a philosophy, not a religion; that is to say, he was rather the intellectual organizer of previously emergent values, than an actual discoverer of new ones. To discover a new value is to embody it. Not that Plato did not embody a value, and a new one. As the organizer of values, he was himself new value. Whereas Jesus represented organic advance, Plato represented intellectual advance. Intellectual advance is also organic advance but, so to speak, on a limited front. The organic advance of Jesus was total.

The God who is the focus of hypostatized values, being intellectual fiction, cannot be a fact of experience. It is true enough that Jesus believed that he experienced his loving God, and Plato – to judge by his letters – believed that he entered into communication with his Idea of the Good. But this Unity of immediate experience has, in fact, no relation whatever with the God who is hypostatized value. The unity of immediate experience, by whatever arduous contemplation it is reached, is always biological unity. Between the God of experience and the God of values there is, in reality, no communication whatever. It is only illusion by which they are identified. Any God of values whatever can therefore, become the God of experience. He is simply transferred to the experience; he is, in any given individual who has made him a constant object of thought, the necessary and inevitable means of formulating his immediate experience. But, even so, the God of immediate experience is invariably averred to repel all attributes.

There is yet a third God – not wholly peculiar to Christianity but represented with unique emphasis in Christianity. This is the incarnate God. He is, again, totally different from the God of values, or the God of experience. He is a value actually emergent, a real and significant organic variation. He also, if he is the constant object of thought, can become, no less than the God of values, a God of immediate experience; though this is perhaps more

rare. Naturally so, because a definite historical individual is difficult to identify with an all-pervading Unity of immediate experience. But if he is sufficiently de-individualized, as Jesus could be by Paul who had barely known him, if he becomes Christ instead of Jesus, the transference is possible.

But the operation of this third God, the incarnate God, is, generally speaking, of another order. It is by means of admiration, veneration and imitation. In our terminology it is by means of organic response to a significant variation. This response assumes strange forms in sensitive individuals. They study the story of Jesus; he becomes real to them: and they have to endure the fact of his death in agony. Having become real to them, he does not die. He is resurrected. What has happened is that the metabiological will to maintain the variation seeks expression in the denial of the biological fact. Metabiological verity has always found it hard to escape metaphor. The feeling of exaltation and serenity – the *Nunc Dimittis* feeling to which we have referred in our autobiographical section – is the expression of a deep and just metabiological joy that so wonderful and significant a variation, though doomed to biological death of a most horrible kind, has a plenitude of metabiological life. The metabiological transcends the biological. This is the secret of all great tragedy.

These three Gods, all utterly different, the God of values, the God of immediate experience, and the

incarnate God, are inextricably intertwined in the Christian religion. It is surely no wonder that it has endured so long; nor is it surprising that those who deliberately ignore it stand self-condemned of rejecting the accumulated riches of fifteen hundred years of European civilization. To be really convinced, as the majority of modern rationalists and scientists appear to be convinced, that a totally new and wholly superior epoch of humanity began when all this was rejected in favour of a universe which man could only enter at the price of becoming a thing of billiard balls and wire, is to confess a curious naivety. The only Science that can replace this magnificent creation is a Science which makes up its mind to understand it. The Science which shirks the duty will never become wisdom.

6

BEYOND GOD

§ 1

Of the three separate Gods who are thus incorporated in the Christian religion, we may say, in accord with our previous examination, that the God of values is intellectual fiction, though once necessary fiction; that the God of immediate experience is a means of describing a real and potentially significant experience; and that the incarnate God is real, but because he is incarnate he is not God.

To identify these three Gods is, of course, ultimately impossible. But they offer the opportunity of a strange and deeply interesting amalgamation. By a plausible and natural self-deception, the God of immediate experience can be identified with the God of values. For one experiencing subject the God of values becomes 'real' and 'personal'. But to find any evidence of his handiwork in the things of earth or the lives of men remains as difficult for Christianity as it was for Plato. It is impossible to find the reason why the world is not perfect. A personal God of values cannot get on without a personal Devil to negate them: and how the Devil arose is a problem of which the solution passes conjecture. At this point of seemingly insuperable contradiction there enters the experience

of the incarnate God, whose metabiological life persists in spite of his biological disaster. This brings the assurance that evil is, ultimately, only appearance. The God of values, the God of immediate experience, and the incarnate God are one, and the symbol (or the evidence) of that great identity is the resurrection of the Lord.

The identification is, from our view, arbitrary and untenable. But to recognize this, however necessary the recognition may be, is in itself negative and nugatory, unless we at the same time recognize the audacity and significance of the identification. The real danger to-day is not that men may believe in the Christian God, but that they may believe themselves superior to the generations of men who conceived and created him. It may be that I am deluded, but it seems to me that the creation of the Christian God is the greatest achievement of that branch of humanity to which I belong; it is more wonderful even than the creation of the God of Jesus. That was the creation of a single man; but the Christian God was elaborated by fifteen centuries of the travail of master-minds bent on establishing and perpetuating the highest values they knew. The Christian God contains the God of Jesus, but he also contains the life of Jesus, which was still more significant than his God; he also contains the God of Plato, and he contains a solution, evident to all devoted contemplation, of the problem of evil and imperfection which was for Plato

insoluble. Further, though we have called this identification arbitrary, it was almost inescapable for minds which are capable at once of philosophic thought and religious experience. The minds which elaborated the Christian God were such minds.

The reason why this strange and beautiful identification was almost necessary is plain enough. It was a magnificent and unparalleled metabiological effort to maintain all values as it were, in one single fortress against barbarism. That the effort was only half conscious was inevitable; no consciousness would have been capable of it. The nucleus of this aggregation of values was the greatest, and most evidently organic; the actual emergent value of the new man Jesus. Inseparable from this was the value of his God. With this was intertwined the intellectual value of the great Platonic conception of the values themselves as eternal, and as causal and as one. And all these values were God. They were lifted above the biological flux until such time as they could safely be replaced in it without danger of being overwhelmed and lost.

There was no other way of saving them. What categories of thought were then in existence by which values could be preserved without being hypostatized? Even to-day many honest and serious minds can see no way but this. But then it was certain: if Jesus was to be acknowledged he must be acknowledged as God. He could not be a new man

in our sense (though St. Paul very nearly conceived him as that), what else could he but God? Who, but God, could be the source of that strange meta-biological enhancement which supervened upon the patient contemplation of his life and death? Where, but in God, could the great Platonic trinity of the True, the Good and the Beautiful be secure? Of what, but of God, could be this wonderful mystical experience which recurred again and again in souls devoted to God's contemplation, and bent on his discovery?

That there were, and are, ultimately insuperable contradictions in this conception of God is manifest: but it was as manifest to the great Christian minds as to our own. To imagine that they were fools and we are wise is ridiculous. They recognized and accepted the contradictions; and the attitude of mind, or soul, which accepted these contradictions as inherent in the effort to express a reality which intuition discerned and experience ratified, was faith. Faith and knowledge were completely separate. 'It is impossible,' said St. Thomas Aquinas in a fundamental axiom, 'that there should be faith and knowledge concerning the same object.' Press intellectual knowledge home to its last capacity, still reality lay clean beyond it. Intellectual knowledge of reality ended in contradictions, as did Plato's, and these contradictions could not be ultimate. They were reconciled in God, who was apprehended by Faith.

Now there was, if we choose to insist upon it, a prodigious assumption in this conviction that the contradictions to which intellectual knowledge inevitably led could not be ultimate. But the assumption is necessary to man. Not to make it is in the last resort to deny that there is any reality at all. The human mind cannot really work, and the human being cannot really function except on the assumption that an ultimate contradiction in the nature of things cannot be true; it is appearance and not reality. Nothing could well be more preposterous than that a 'scientific' age should take exception to Christianity because of this assumption. It underlies all the intellectual operations of the human mind. In our language, this assumption is the form necessarily taken by the fundamental urge of life towards organic assimilation of the universe. One can neither incorporate, nor be incorporated into, a contradictory universe.

But there is a difference, and a very significant one, between the assumption as made by Christianity, and the assumption as made by modern science. The real and evident purpose for which Christianity made use of the assumption was the inclusion of values in reality. It would be extravagant to say that science uses it in order to exclude values from reality, but it is true to say that science is absolutely careless of values. Values are 'unscientific'. Christianity did not care whether values were 'unscientific' or not; it was absolutely certain

that they must be preserved. As a matter of fact, Christianity had as much intellectual difficulty about values as modern science; but it knew, with a certainty and sanity of which modern science appears to be innocent, that if values were not somehow consubstantial with the universe, then the universe was contradictory, unreal and intolerable.

We begin to see the real meaning and the reality of Faith. I confess that there were years when I was profoundly bewildered by the mystery of Christan Faith. It seemed to me that I was completely incapable of faith; and it followed inexorably that an attitude of mind of which I was incapable I could not hope to comprehend. Possibly it has happened that in the past I have allowed myself to speak slightingly of Christian Faith; if so, I am heartily sorry. Faith, and indeed the Faith, is a far greater and more noble thing than I understood it to be; and it ill became me to speak lightly of it, seeing that I was wholly guided by the same impulse which, in times past, expressed itself in faith and created the Faith. But one comes slowly and painfully to a full awareness of one's own obdurate impulses. That half-conscious determination never to sacrifice values out of which this book arose, is essentially Faith; and to its presence in me I owe whatever capacity these pages may reveal to do full justice to the majesty and humanity of the great Christian Church.

Faith then is the form necessarily taken, during a long epoch of human history to which we are

intimately bound and of which we are the direct inheritors, by the determination that values must be preserved. Values are real, says Faith, they must be an integral part of reality. That is bedrock. Of Faith in this sense, and in the last analysis it has no other sense, every serious thinking man is guilty. It is his necessary declaration of loyalty to human life. If values are accidental, if they appear like the will o' the wisp only to lead men into the swamps of doubt and despair, then the sooner we get out of life the better. Nothing in our life will become us so well as leaving it.

We have said that Faith declares that values are real. Actually that declaration is not made by Faith; it is made by the integral being of Man. He cannot avoid it. If he spends his life arguing and proving that values cannot be real, he is merely declaring that for him the value we call Truth is real. And even if he takes his own negation deeply to heart as an honest man should, and he commits suicide, his suicide is the declaration that one value at least is real – the value we call Integrity – that the Truth acknowledged must be obeyed, even to death. Every living human being, from the coward to the hero, is committed to a belief in the reality of some value, even though it be merely the value of the perpetuation of his own life. Therefore, Faith does not really arise in the mere affirmation, which may be quite unconscious, that some value is real. Nor again is it merely the conscious acknowledg-

ment that all values are real. Faith is the determination that the intellect must make that acknowledgment and *take the consequences.* The consequences are very serious. The intellect is bound to yield under the strain; it is forced to confess that it cannot grasp reality. That confession, sincerely and humbly made, is Faith. Faith is the submission of the intellect to the integral being of man, by the force of the conviction that values must be real.

Now it is clear that if there exists no category of thought by which values can be regarded as inherent in and consubstantial with the reality of the universe as immediately known, it is absolutely necessary that they should be maintained by some power at once outside and implicit in the universe of our experience. There must be God, and he must be a personal God, since his function is to maintain, incorruptible by the flux of mere being, those values without which the integral being of man cannot endure. All that is noblest, all that is, therefore, most precarious, in human existence, is sustained by him. To imagine that anything less than a person could fulfil this high function is to imagine a vain thing. In other words, what the Christian conception of a personal God really means is that the human effort after personal perfection is not merely relevant to the reality of the universe, but is absolutely essential to it. To be like God is the whole duty of man; and obviously so, when we realize that God has been created out of the sum of human perfections – of all

those rare and lovely manifestations of life which the integral being of man will not willingly let die.

But God is more than this. He is not merely the abiding place of all human perfections; he is the reconciliation of all contradictions. It is impossible for the intellect to conceive how that supremely personal God who is the sum and harmony of all human perfections can be responsible for the world of pain and imperfection that we know. Christianity has the answer. It is the only religion which dared to crucify its God; it is the only religion which deified a real man who credibly and probably did embody many of those human perfections which are realized in and eternally maintained by God, and deified his inevitable disaster. On that man the evil of the world was concentrated. He was deliberately slain for his perfection, and for no other cause. That is the central meditation of the Christian faith. And everyone who dares to meditate it, be he Christian or unbeliever, knows that in that evil there was good, in that pain joy, and in that death a victory. *Respiciamus, donec respiciet.* There, and not elsewhere, is the proof of the reality of the Christian God.

§ 2

Now I do not believe all this, which is the substance of *the* Faith. In fact I am certain that it is untrue. But if I could see no other way but this of establishing the reality of human values, why then

I should believe it. But wait. I should long to believe it. Indeed, as certain of these pages bear witness, I have longed to believe it. There were long months when verily I could see no other way. And still I could not believe it. The mere passage of time has made it impossible, and this although I have, as I believe, the *anima naturaliter Christiana* of which St. Augustine speaks – the naturally Christian soul. Fundamentally Christian, yet for ever cast out from Christianity, congenitally unable to make the great sacrifice which was no sacrifice at all in the days when Christianity was elaborated, when rather Christianity grew in response to a peremptory and enduring necessity. I could not sacrifice my truth-value. The truth-value had changed in the six hundred years that had elapsed since Orthodoxy grew to ripeness; and if, as I have tried to show, Christianity was the form inevitably taken by the conscious and unconscious demand that values once achieved should be perpetuated, the achievement of a new truth-value imposed the necessity for a new form of expression – not of Christianity, which is itself only a form of expression, but of the determination which had created Christianity – namely, the determination that *all* values achieved must be perpetuated.

For many years, in fact for the centuries since the Renaissance, the form of expression which the new necessity assumed was the struggle to reconcile the new truth-value with Christianity. In essence,

the new truth-value was the refusal of the supernatural as a valid category of thought; it was an insistence upon the necessity of the experimental method. The question was whether the experimental method could be reconciled with Christianity. It is easy to say it obviously could not be reconciled with Christianity; it is more difficult to see precisely how the experimental method was to be applied to it. But the first enthusiasts of the experimental method had no such misgivings. Christian dogma made certain assertions about the nature of the Universe: these assertions could not be validated by experiment: therefore the assertions were untrue. The argument is simple enough. Rationalists are rather simple people, and it suited them. But they failed to grasp the all-important fact that the Universe concerning which Christian dogma made its assertions, was not the universe concerning which they made their experiments. The Universe of Christian dogma was a Universe which included man, and of which man was the centre; the universe of the experimental method was a universe from which man had been excluded, and into which he could, by hypothesis, never find entrance again.

But it was, unfortunately for Christianity, true that it also made and could not avoid making certain dogmatic assertions concerning the nature of the universe with which the experimental method was concerned. It said: *Hoc est corpus meum* about

a wafer, and it refused to admit that it said it in a symbolical sense.

Now this refusal was not stupid or even obscurantist, as is falsely alleged by Protestant zealots. The allegation shows them lagging in capacity of thought. If I were captain of a large and goodly vessel fraught with human values and laden with human souls, and a man appeared out of the hold with a great auger in his hand, saying that in the name of truth he must bore a hole in the bottom, I should not hesitate. I should put him in irons, and the sanity of the world would applaud me. That, and not some inconsequential stupidity, was what the leaders of the Catholic Church were doing when they refused to admit that '*Hoc est corpus meum*' was other than literal truth. For very much depended upon the maintenance of the literal truth of that assertion.

It had been made originally by the incarnate God. Deny the literal truth of the assertion: 'This is my Body', and the mighty edifice of Christianity was ruined. The incarnate God had been mistaken. That was impossible and unthinkable. Then the incarnate God had not spoken the words. But if not these words, then how be sure that he had spoken any of the words attributed to him? Then, he verily did speak them, but in a symbolical sense. By the same licence his declaration that he was the Son of God, or the evidence of his bodily resurrection, could be symbolically interpreted. There was no

escape. Give way on this point, give way finally upon all. And why give way? Did not the Protestant profess to believe no less than the Catholic that Jesus was incarnate God. If such a miracle had once happened, why should it not be repeated in little every day on God's own altar? If 'This is my Body' was impossible, then no less impossible was 'This is my beloved Son'. That the Protestants could not and cannot see it is their misfortune. If it was credible that God was once veritably incarnate, then '*Hoc est corpus meum*' was perfectly credible too. The great Church thought clearly and well; and no one who understands its argument can deny that there is some force in the allegation that Protestantism in rejecting it was zealous not for truth, but for something less respectable.

The great Church would yield nothing. It would yield nothing, because it would have to yield all. To surrender the incarnate God was to capitulate to barbarism and incoherence. And it would not. Thank God, it did not. For it has kept before the sanity of the world the real choice that lies before it; either to reject Christianity absolutely, or to accept it absolutely. Truly there is no middle way for a mind capable of thinking the issue *out*.

And there the great Church stands to-day. It will never yield; and no one with a spark of true understanding but would bitterly regret it, if ever it did yield. One day perhaps many, many centuries

hence, the last pope, without a cardinal, or a bishop, or a priest, or one faithful one to serve his altar, will celebrate the last Mass with his dying breath. At that moment the very Universe itself should be hushed to hear him. For then, and not till then, Christianity will be dead.

There is not, and never will be, any reconciliation between Christianity and the experimental method. Christianity is the great Church; and nothing else is Christianity. To call anything else Christianity is to plunge into confusion and chaos; and it is an insult to Christianity. Christianity is a great thing, not a little one; one thing, not many things; a rich thing, not a poor thing; a majestic thing, not a thing of shreds and patches. Christianity is Christianity at its noblest, truest, and most comprehensive: and that is the Catholic Church. If you desire to be Christian, join it. It will make no demands upon you which are more fearful to reason than the demands made by any peddling form of Christianity. It asks no greater sacrifice than Little Bethel or the Church of England; and it does not insult your intelligence by inviting you to become a member of a contradiction in terms – the church *of England?* As though there could be a Church – of England. There is, and can be, but one Church of Christianity: the one Catholic and Apostolic Church. Belong to that, or come out of it altogether. There you are something; elsewhere you are nothing.

There you have something; elsewhere you have nothing. There your sacrifice has its not inadequate reward; elsewhere you sacrifice in vain.

You will be, I am sorry to say, a metabiological reversion according to my philosophy; but at least you will not be a hobbledehoy. If you do not care to be a metabiological reversion, then rid yourself utterly, once and for all, of Christianity by understanding it. By understanding it, not by ignoring it. You will never be rid of it, that way. To understand Christianity is to incorporate the values it expresses; by not incorporating them, you are still a metabiological reversion, and a far more serious case. You sacrifice all the values expressed in Christianity, the Catholic sacrifices but one. You are rudimentary; he may be past, but he may be perfect.

To understand Christianity demands a good deal from you. You must be capable of re-living the specific Christian experience; and you must be capable of understanding, that is, of experiencing, the demand which Christianity was created to satisfy. That demand is not the demand for certainty; Catholics are no more certain than you or I. It is not the demand for happiness; Catholics are no more happy than other men: or for a comforting belief; Catholics get no more comfort from their faith, than other men who have none. Nor is it even the demand for order; though Catholics do have more of that than other men. But fundamentally it

is the demand, inherent in high humanity, that values shall be real. The Good, the True, the Beautiful shall veritably be secure.

There are two ways, and I believe only two ways, of securing them. One is to believe in God, who maintains them, and the other to believe in what I believe. To believe in God is to believe in the incarnate God. That necessarily, not arbitrarily or capriciously. You cannot believe in God without ultimately believing in the incarnate God. Otherwise there is no link nor real connection between God and the world in which we live. The God who is Truth, and Good, and Beauty, and Love did not create our world. The God who created our world is not the God who is Truth, and Good, and Beauty, and Love. The only way to overcome that dilemma is to believe in the incarnate God, and all that that belief implies.

The other way, is to secure values by simply seeing once and for all that they secure themselves. Values *are* simply those organic creations in the life-process to which there is response. Values, we repeat once more, are variations which maintain themselves; and there are no other values. It sounds like chaos. Withdraw the policeman, and whose values are secure? But who said 'Withdraw the policeman'? Not I. I said: The policeman will be withdrawn on the day when there is no longer need of him. The policeman is himself a value, so long as he maintains himself. One day he will become

rudimentary to the organism; and on that day the social organism will have advanced a perceptible stage along the path of destiny.

That is obvious; but the truth is very obvious: so obvious that it is difficult to notice it. And the truth that values are organic variations which maintain themselves is so obvious that, had it not taken me such a long while to notice it myself, I should be surprised that no one had noticed it before. (Perhaps somebody has: in which case he was a variation which maintains itself in me.) After all, this is a truth of some importance; for it completely solves what one of my bolder friends once described as 'the so-called problem of God'. We cease to need him as the repository of the eternal values, because there are no eternal values. Values are emergent, and perpetuated. There is no Good, nor ever was; there are good things and good people. There is no Beauty, nor ever was; there are beautiful things and beautiful people. There is no Truth, nor ever was; there are true statements and true sayings. We cease to need God, in his incarnate form, to solve the problem of evil and pain. There is no such problem. We can watch the emergent value slowly maintaining itself against the fundamental inertia of the organism; establishing metabiological life beyond the confines of biological death. This truth is manifest in the history of the incarnate God; it is not least by meditating that history that we have reached our conclusions. The metabiological value

does endure, and the organic process labours in ways beyond finding out to maintain it. We may believe that whatever of value there is in any human life, however humble, and however distressed, is perpetuated somewhere in the organism. Finally, we cease to need him as the explanation of the immediate experience of an all-pervading Unity. The unity is real, the experience is real; but it gives, and demands, no God.

God does not exist; but we shall never be able to do without him, unless we know in ourselves, the reasons why he was created. That knowledge is dynamic; for no one can know in himself the demands which God was created to satisfy, without determining that for his part, his life shall be devoted to the perpetuating of those values which God was created to secure. If we deny God, as we must, then we must bear his burden. In him the contradictions of the universe were reconciled; they must be reconciled, henceforward, in ourselves. In him the great values were incorporated; they must be incorporated, henceforward, in ourselves. In him, a new man emerged; he must emerge, henceforward, in us.

7

BIOLOGICAL AND META-BIOLOGICAL

§ 1

We have not concerned ourselves with Religion in the abstract: first, because there is no abstract Religion – Religion is not, as many seem to suppose, the same as Philosophy – and, second, because we at this moment are the direct inheritors of one definite and particular religion – Catholic Christianity. This, and not another, is the religion we have to understand intimately if we are to be conscious of our own organic continuity.

Even so, we do not claim to have given a complete account of Catholic Christianity as it is actually practised. It includes in its actual cultus many things which we have ignored – such as Mariolatry. These elements are important enough in themselves; but they have very little to do with the newness of Catholic Christianity. That lies in the newness of its conception of God.

God, as we have explained, is the means by which man seeks to make the universe a unity which he can assimilate, or to which he can assimilate himself, which comes to the same thing. The assertion of the existence of God is the assertion that the universe is not a chaos; it may be incomprehensible,

but it is not a chaos. The continuous projection into God of man's own highest achievements, or more strictly the achievements which were precious to men most deeply concerned that the universe should not be a chaos, was the necessary means of asserting an ultimate unity. For among all the things for which God was responsible in the mind of any God-discoverer, he was certainly responsible for the God-discoverer himself. What he was God must be. God might be many things besides; but he must be that. God was thus the ever-growing repository of painfully achieved human perfections. He grew with man, and he helped man to grow.

The deification of an actual man was the necessary consummation of the process of God-creation. Not any man could thus have been deified; only a great man, and a new man, and a man moreover whose greatness and newness should be perpetually evident. Christianity, as we have said, is more than the man Jesus; but without him it would be only a vaguely remembered philosophy. The new man who spoke words that testify his newness to all who have ears to hear them; the new man who was killed for his newness – this was the deity. Newness and the impotence of death against it manifest in a single man, and this man God.

What had happened was this. Jesus had enriched God with his living self; his followers enriched God with his death and agony. Thereafter, there was little indeed that God could not contain. God was

comprehensive at last; the pain of the world in travail of the future was now in him. He was a true God, now. He would not cease to be a true God, even when men ceased to believe in him. He could only cease to be a true God, when men were prepared to do for themselves what he had done for them. They must make the universe a unity; they must bear the burden of their own newness, without hope of reward; they must take responsibility for themselves.

The unity of the real universe, of which struggling and suffering man is a part; the necessity that man must struggle and suffer and struggle again; and the truth that only by admitting, in his depths, this unity and this necessity he could find his own unity – these perceptions were the great new values with which Christianity enriched the conception of God. They were all manifest in the pure phenomenon of Jesus. Christianity blazed it and them across the heavens.

To find a place in the unity of the universe for the emergent variation of the new man, and for the biological disaster which overtook him; to accept Jesus as a significant variation, and to refuse the despair which his fate appeared to impose – this was the effort and achievement of Christianity. That it necessitated paradox and could ultimately be secured only by Faith may seem to modern minds to invalidate it. But that is because modern minds do not think so well as they believe themselves to do.

If they thought more deeply they would find that paradox is inevitable in any complete description of the real, and that Faith is inevitable also if we refuse to believe that the real is a chaos; Faith, indeed, is that refusal. The modern mind will not recognize its own faith; it prefers to leave it hidden and obscurely septic. That is certainly no reason why it should refuse attention to a system which from the beginning has sought to keep the nature of its own faith keen and clear before its eyes. It is obviously no *reason;* but it probably is the unconscious motive for the determined disregard of Christianity which now prevails.

In short, we believe that men to-day, and among them some of the most genuinely enlightened, are unconsciously afraid of Christianity. It is a mystery into which they are obscurely warned from penetrating. It is strange, alien, and forbidding. It is a grim and grisly relic of the Dark Ages; a fearful survival. Spells and enchantment lurk within it, and if a man were to venture himself within the cavern door, who knows what might happen to him?

Who knows indeed? For he might learn something about himself which he does not want to know. He might learn, for instance, that it is man's duty to know what he veritably is instead of indulging some vain conceit of himself. He might learn, again, that a chaotic universe necessitates a chaotic man. Worst of all, he might learn that there *is* salvation and there *is* damnation, and that these

tremendous words express not idle and superstitious fancies, but verities of human life which lie open to the knowledge of any man with the courage to look at the facts of his own experience.

§ 2

Christianity is the form taken by the greatest effort of the world-organism to maintain its own achieved and emergent values. In so describing it we have been compelled to use the word 'value' freely; but always the word has been used in the sense of our own definition, that 'value' is a quality attached, by any given individual, to certain organic variations which he desires to perpetuate. When many individuals desire to perpetuate the same variations, there is a class of values.

The real values of mankind are simply the variations which maintain themselves. My values are simply the variations which I resolve to maintain. When, therefore, I say that Christianity is the greatest effort of the world-organism to maintain its own achieved and emergent values, I am saying that the variations to which I respond are, in the main, those which Christianity strove to perpetuate; and, further, I am saying that there is a whole great class of people (Christian or otherwise) which responds to these variations as I myself respond to them.

We call the variations which Christianity has

sought to maintain in existence significant variations. There are for ourselves other significant variations which Christianity has not sought to maintain. The effort required to bring these new variations into organic unity with those which it maintained was a a given point in history too great for Christianity. Christianity, after all, is simply the succession of Christian men and women. Of these a few elected to make the effort to reconcile the new variations with the old. This effort is called the Reformation; but far fewer of the reformers than is generally supposed by Protestant historians really embodied an effort of the organism to advance. Most of them were retrogressive and reversionary. Most of those who separated themselves from the Catholic Church did not understand from what they were separating themselves: they did not themselves incorporate the significant variation of Catholicism. They were rudimentary Christians, not superior ones, as they believed themselves to be. Luther and Calvin were rudimentary; Melancthon and Zwingli might reasonably claim to mark an advance. So might Erasmus; but he did not leave the Church.

Ever since that time, the problem has been growing more and more acute. The problem is to reconcile the significant variations maintained by Christianity with the no less significant variations embodied in men who in pursuit of order in the universe had found it more and more necessary to restrict the category of the supernatural. Somehow

a new unity had to be achieved. Conscious man was divided by the pull of a new and mighty variation making its imperative organic claim upon him. Such stresses resolve themselves, it is true, but the place where they resolve themselves is man. The variations which are destined to maintain themselves, maintain themselves; but they maintain themselves through man. To know that there is Destiny is to know oneself the battle-ground where it is decided.

§ 3

To know that the variation, if it is significant, will maintain itself, and that, if it does not maintain itself, it is not significant, does not absolve man from the struggle. Far from it, it teaches him that the struggle is inevitable and right. There is a reason for it. His effort to maintain the significant variation, his will to let himself become the mortal instrument by which the conflicting variations struggling within him may attain a new embodiment – this is his loyalty to life. The struggle is not his struggle; if it were, he could not endure it, nor would he be required to endure it.

It is a wholly natural process. That, for long centuries, the supernatural category was invoked to describe it, was due simply to the non-existence of any other category which could contain the facts. Just as the simple recognition of the fact that Jesus was a new man compelled men to describe him as

God incarnate, so the simple recognition of the fact that, by the contemplation of the fact of Jesus, 'a new man' emerged within the individual after conflict, and chaos, and despair, compelled men to describe the new 'birth' as the reclamation of a soul by God. The dynamic of life cannot be described in merely rational terms. In Jesus a new man *was* born into the world; in those who recognized him for what he was, whether during his life or in the long years of Christianity after his death, something happened, automatically by the sheer fact of that recognition, which could only be described as a rebirth. These were facts, not vain imaginations; scientific facts, because all facts are scientific, but incapable of recognition by science until a science should arise that resolutely set itself to include them.

Such a science begins to emerge in this book. It does not claim to explain these facts, because science explains nothing. It does with them precisely what science, when it is not self-deceived, is conscious of doing to its facts: it gives the simplest and most economic description of them. It does this by observing, what has not been previously observed with the same comprehensiveness, that the so-called spiritual is absolutely continuous with the biological. There is no dividing line between them. In the so-called spiritual order life proceeds by precisely the same kind of process as in the biological. There is organic variation, and response to variation; when the responses to variation are conflicting, there is

inward struggle which, if maintained, produces first stasis, and then resolution into newness. A new variation has emerged.

The intellectual consciousness is a means of the process; but it does not at any point control it. Take intellectual self-consciousness to the extreme conceivable pitch, still the process is hidden from it. Not that it happens in the unconscious, for there is no such place. It happens in and to the organism as a whole of which the intellectual consciousness is only a particular modality. The intellectual consciousness is simply a means of response to variation.

Response to variation is, like variation itself, always organic. We speak of the will. But the will is really appearance. A man's awareness of his will is merely his consciousness of organic response at work in him. The will to maintain a significant variation is *inevitably* aroused in man when he attains the knowledge that a variation is significant. There is deliberate tautology here; for the knowledge that a variation is significant is a mere description of the fact of complete organic response to a variation. When we say we know that such a variation is significant, we are simply saying that we are aware of ourselves as organically responding to it. What we call the will is already at work in the organic response.

It is so incredibly simple that it will probably appear simply incredible. I cannot really recognize that Jesus was a significant variation without willing,

almost literally, to absorb him into myself. I cannot really recognize that Plato was a significant variation, without willing, almost literally, to absorb him into myself. This absorption is what we have called organic assimilation on the metabiological plane. The organic assimilation is, in reality, the knowledge of significant variation *in act*. The two are inseparable, a single organic process separated only for the purpose of discourse. And this organic process includes and subsumes all the most abstract processes of mind. Thus, the will to maintain a significant variation is only a description from one particular angle of a process which can be as truly described as the self-maintenance of a variation. Simply, the organic process, being metabiological, involves the exercise of will. Equally, it demands the exercise of intellect and emotion. The three traditionally separable aspects of man's metabiological unity are inevitably involved in the self-maintenance of the metabiological variation, which is 'value'.

§ 4

The effort of man is not merely to maintain the significant metabiological variation, but also to achieve metabiological unity. This achievement of metabiological unity is the condition of really maintaining metabiological variations. In other words, the variations which he organically assimilates must become organic unity in himself. That, on the pure

biological plane, would be a tautology; on that plane no organic assimilation without organic unity is possible. On the metabiological plane organic unity is not so automatically assured. For variation may be intellectually assimilated, or it may be emotionally assimilated, or it may be assimilated quite unconsciously by moral habit, or physical disposition. And intellect, emotion, moral habit and physical disposition may perfectly well be discordant with one another; indeed, they almost invariably are. To resolve them into organic and metabiological unity is not an easy matter.

For the moment, to simplify matters, we leave out the purely biological element, to consider the metabiological situation. The various responses to variation are not reconciled: those which have been aroused through intellect, through emotion, through moral habit are at war with one another. This conflict is the great metabiological crisis in the life of man; on its solution depends the decision how much of significant variation shall be perpetuated through him. By the comprehensiveness of the elements involved in the metabiological crisis, and the comprehensiveness of the solution, the importance of his part in the organic evolution of the whole is determined. He is become a focus of the life-process. Shall he revert, or shall he be new? Shall he repeat a pattern, or become a new form? Shall he become a new combination of significant variations, or shall he be an old one? How can he maintain all signifi-

cant variations? Obviously, he cannot maintain them all; he cannot perpetuate all values. But since, by definition, value attaches only to those variations which do maintain themselves, he is not required to perpetuate them all. Some values are doomed to die; variations which have maintained themselves over long periods become at last rudimentary. The resolution of the metabiological crisis demands as much the rejection of dying values as a new incorporation of living ones. The individual, in his period of metabiological crisis, which lasts in a less acute form for the whole of his period of metabiological activity, is the battle-ground of variations which seek to maintain themselves in and through him. The significance of his own metabiological life depends on the significance of the variations which he embodies and transmits. That will be judged not in his lifetime, or by the minds of men. Life itself will ultimately pronounce upon him: He became a significant variation, or he reverted. In a long sequence of the metabiological crises of posterity he will maintain himself, or he will be rejected.

To strive to become oneself significant variation, by embodying significant variations in a new creative whole is, we believe, the modern equivalent of doing 'the will of God'. It is easy to say: You cannot do the will of God except you believe in his existence. But a childish argument of that kind can be ignored by those who have realized that God himself is nothing but a means of perpetuating

the variations which are called values. To perpetuate the living value, and let die the dying one in ourselves is to do the will of God; and not the least of the dying values is the belief that God exists. It is the will of God that God should die, and we are doing what we can to obey it. Of course, it is open to any lover of confusion to say that the organic process which we here describe is God. It is not. The only verdict that can be accepted on what is, or what is not, God, is the verdict of the Catholic Church; and there is no doubt about that. That the organic process is mysterious, thrilling, satisfying; that it awakens in those who discern it a response of the same kind as the Christian once received from his contemplation of the manifold God of Orthodoxy; that every essential element in the great whole of Catholic Christianity has its equivalent somewhere in the system outlined here – all this is true. But none the less a God cannot be extracted from it without an equivocation of which an honest mind should be ashamed. Here simply is reality. It is a reality to which man responds, and which responds to man.

It is perfectly true that the nearest historical approximation to the system here developed is Orthodox Christianity. That is necessary. They were created to meet the same fundamental need, and in somewhat the same fashion. Both are based on a determination to recognize the reality of the man Jesus, of the mystical experience, and of all

'values'. Two systems which arise out of the same basic recognitions must needs be like one another. At the same time, they are utterly different. The fluxing agent in either system is of a different kind. In the Christian system, Jesus is God, the object of mystical experience is God, and all values are God. God is the medium where they meet and merge. In this system the reality of organic evolution is the medium. Jesus is a supremely significant variation – a new man; the object of mystical experience is the underlying unity of biological life; and values of all kinds are organic variations which maintain themselves. The scheme is wholly natural; but with a genuine and thorough-going Naturalism. It replaces the old comprehensive Christian bisection of the Universe into natural and supernatural, by an equally comprehensive unification of the Universe into a continuity of biological and metabiological. In it, conscious Science and conscious Religion become absolutely identical.

When we cease to hypostatize values, the need and the possibility of what is ordinarily known as Religion disappears. Values, in order to be real, do not have to be eternal: if they are eternal, they necessarily cease to be real. The notion that the reality of values depends on their eternity is a fallacy congenital to the logical intellect, which is, by the laws of its operation, forced to separate the universal from the particular. That separation is false to reality. So long as we believe that the

operations of the logical intellect alone bring us to reality, this separation of the universal from the particular, of the value from the variation, is inescapable. And inescapable ultimately, if the universe is not to be divided for ever, is God to unite it again. A thorough-going intellectualism, which refuses finally to accept an irrational and contradictory universe, is bound to end in God, and in Faith. It is strange that this is not clearly recognized.

At one end or the other of the process the intellect must abnegate. The choice is simple and clear. Either it must abnegate at the end or at the beginning. At the end it must abnegate in obedience to the deep and primary organic demand that the Universe which it has riven in twain, and cannot join together, must be one. If it becomes truly conscious of the nature and origin of the demand it is forced to obey, it will be ashamed of this ultimate capitulation, and will recognize, gladly and with good will, that the true moment for capitulation was the beginning. The universal ought never to have been separated from the particular, nor the value from the variation. That the operation of intellect depends upon and demands the separation is no reason for allowing it to endure. But not to allow the separation to endure does not mean that the operations of the intellect should cease. They should be allowed absolute freedom as before; only it should never for one moment be forgotten that

they are leading away from the ultimate reality and not towards it. Reality is the pure phenomenon, and there is no other. In other words, we must recognize clearly that the logical intellect is only a partial and peculiar faculty of the organic and integral human being. The organic and integral human being is active in the response to the pure phenomenon.

This, on the logical or intellectual side, is the beginning of wisdom. Once we have reintegrated the universal into the particular, the value into the variation, and determined that it shall remain embodied there, we are safeguarded against the abuse of intellect. We can use it fully, without danger of becoming its slaves. Of all its services in clearing the way for us to reach the sequence of pure phenomena which is history and reality, we may avail ourselves without stint; but we shall always be mindful to restore the continuity of process which it seeks to separate and make static. The unity of the universe is biological, not logical.

To contemplate the richness and variety of the universal process not as a march of dialectic, but as an actual growth of the same kind as the growth of a flower or a child; to apprehend it immediately as real and organic; to watch in the human history which most nearly concerns us the total organism slowly and inevitably responding to the significant variation which is value; to see the rise and fall of Gods, and to know them as always organic to the

process which for a time they subserve, to which inevitably they become rudimentary; to follow the slow change in the faculties and potentialities of men as more and more new variations maintain themselves in him by his response to them; to understand how marvellously the great achievements endure, so that not one of them is lost, and how the everlasting newness of life makes its inevitable way into the unknown against the vast inertia that lurks for ever throughout the whole – to know reality after this fashion is to be freed finally from the need of God. There is no place for him in the universe; there is no place for him in the unity of man. There is nothing for him to do.

To this universe we do not need to be reconciled. To know it is to be reconciled to it, and to be reconciled within ourselves. Its unity is the condition of our own unity; and these unities are one.

8

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

§ 1

The problem of human life is the problem of maintaining significant variations. Yet merely to maintain them is not enough. Significant variations were always new creations. The problem of human life for the individual is at once to maintain significant variations, and to become himself a significant variation. These two aims are, fortunately, not incompatible; because, at the moment that significant variations are felt by any individual to be irreconcilable, the possibility of a new significant variation is given. And, of course, there is always the pure emergent variation: the genius. Though he too, we believe, emerges in precisely the same way. Still, we are not concerned with the genius. Those who are conscious of being pure emergent variations can be left to themselves. But ordinary men and women, who have already absorbed enough of significant variation to be genuinely perplexed and distressed by the problem of life – to these, we believe, we have something to offer, which will not fail them in their need.

To be perplexed and distressed by life is to have the possibility of becoming oneself a significant variation. For that perplexity and distress, if real

and not perfunctory, is the indication that the metabiological organism is endeavouring to respond to variations which in the present condition of that organism are incompatible. The measure of the distress is the measure of the potential newness.

The function of the human being is to maintain all possible organic responses. Organic responses are infinitely various. They may be emotional, or intellectual, or animal. What has to be done is to recognize them clearly for what they are. They are not all compatible with one another; many of them will certainly be in open or sullen warfare with each other. Some of them will probably appear to the individual damnable and horrible, and he will be doing his utmost to hide them. His duty is to get them into consciousness.

By getting them into consciousness we do not mean becoming intellectually self-conscious about them. Consciousness, in the sense we use it now, is the nucleus of metabiological unity. It is the centre in which the individual can become aware of himself as an organism responding in various modes. From this centre we can be aware of ourselves as animals; we are animals, and it is our duty never to forget it. We can equally be aware of ourselves as the subjects of metabiological response on the intellectual and the emotional planes. These conflicting tensions are all alike organic, as we have tried to show. The consciousness which is aware of them as conflicting organic tensions is the nucleus of the

metabiological unity. The achievement of that unity depends upon their resolution.

One very drastic method of resolution is the mystical experience. We do not recommend it. This book is, from one point of view, designed as a prophylactic against it, and we hope it will prove efficacious. Modern man must achieve his resolution into metabiological unity less violently, by ways less fraught with the possibility of illusion.

The mystical resolution acts through a complete abrogation of self-consciousness: hence its high potentiality of illusion. It would seem desirable that a resolution should be achieved wholly in consciousness. But we doubt whether this is really possible. For if our description of the process is correct, the whole organism is completely involved in the act of resolution. It would follow then that at the decisive moment, self-consciousness must be in abeyance. We find it impossible to imagine a human organism capable of observing itself in the very act of self-creation. The process at the crucial moment it seems, must be hidden.

So that, although we believe that in this book we have indicated a way to the resolution of some of the deepest conflicting tensions – those of the emotional and intellectual responses – we do not expect too much. We believe that the Universe as organic unity striving after self-creation through the individual, by means of his organic response to metabiological and biological variations, is a satisfying

object of contemplation; and that in the organic response to the pure phenomenon thus simply seen, the intellectual and emotional responses are in harmony. Nevertheless, though we believe this, we cannot expect that this picture of the Universe will be quite so simply apprehended as it seems it ought to be. At the best we suppose what may happen is that a given individual who reads this book may find at the end of it not so much that some dark things have been made clear, but that something has happened to him without his being aware of it. For it is certain that a conflict between emotional and intellectual responses cannot be resolved by the intellect alone.

To make a conscious appeal to that which is beyond consciousness is perhaps paradoxical. It is assuredly inevitable. And there veritably is such a thing as dynamic utterance, which strikes through the consciousness to the organism beneath it. But whether utterance can reach the pitch of self-consciousness at which this book is written and yet be dynamic is a question that remains to be answered.

Still, we must suppose that in some individual is aroused, through our simple description, organic response to the world-organism. He becomes aware with delight that he belongs to it, and that he has a duty towards it, which he must obey. He has touched, or been touched by, 'salvation'. At the same moment he is aware that whether he fulfils his duty or not the world-organism does not care; he

knows what Spinoza knew when he declared that 'he who truly loves God cannot demand that God should love him in return'. A God who does not care is not a God. He discovers also something still more interesting, which Spinoza also discovered, namely, that the realization that the world-organism does not care whether he fulfils his duty or not is precisely what he needed to make his devotion to his duty whole and entire. But for that knowledge, he would have been tainted; with it, he is pure.

And yet, in saying that the world-organism does not care, we have gone beyond the truth. The world-organism cannot care, except through him, and his similars. Through him, it does care, and cares supremely; it cares for nothing else than that his duty shall be done. More than that, he can see, by simple inspection, that to the men before him, through whom it has cared, it has responded. The new thing born through them, it has maintained alive. More yet, it has *lived* through them; strained after them, always through men, as it now strains after newness through him.

Yet, knowing this, he also knows that to become organic unity is its own sole and sufficient reward. That is his duty. How shall he fulfil it?

Plainly, there can be no rules. His task is now his own pure self-creation, and that is not his own at all. The worst of his metabiological crisis is over. He has attained a fundamental certainty that can never wholly leave him. In his depths he is himself;

therefore not himself. But depths are depths. If he looks to find the surface henceforward undisturbed, he has not learned his lesson. Life will teach him that crisis is continual. Crisis and the resolution of crisis is the very condition of metabiological life. It is the systole and diastole of human existence. He must learn that the most blessed gift of all the gods to men (as Goethe said) is Patience. The man who would learn to be an organism must learn to wait; more, he must learn to surrender. He must surrender himself, when the moment comes, to the unknown self within him; and he must never surrender until the moment comes. How shall he know the moment? The moment declares itself. He alone is wise who can recognize it.

No man can say: I have achieved organic unity, once for all. It has to be created anew, over and over again. But the first creation makes the ensuing creations easier, as the birth of one child lessens the travail for the next. Man can learn the pattern of his own incessant rebirth.

§ 2

The resolution of metabiological tensions, and the fulfilment of organic unity, has in one conspicuous instance, led to biological disaster. Obviously, in such a case, the metabiological 'will' to creative newness and the biological 'will' to self-perpetuation were in conflict. In that case, the metabio-

logical 'will' was completely victorious, and the effect has been that the gradual response of the whole organism to that manifestation of creative newness has greatly diminished the possibility of a like conflict. In simpler terms, because Jesus had the courage of his destiny, not only have many other great men had the courage of theirs, but the average of humanity are a little less inclined to kill the emergent variation.

But the possibilities of conflict between the metabiological will and the biological will are always manifold. The man who risks and loses his life to save a perhaps worthless human being from death proclaims anew the truth that the metabiological over-rides the biological. He maintains alive the significant variation which was the belief that every human life is precious. A belief of that kind is not a thing to be argued; it is neither true nor false: it is value. It is variation to which man has, in some degree, responded. The maintenance of the variation tells us something about man that we need to know.

The metabiological overrides the biological. Metabiological perpetuation is independent of biological perpetuation. That is the 'law' of human life, and it is as well-grounded a 'law' as any law of the sciences, inasmuch as it is necessary to any accurate description of the sequence of pure phenomena. There are crucial moments in the organic process of the whole when the biological urge to

self-perpetuation yields to the imperious metabiological insistence upon significant variation. The supreme or classical example is the life and death of Jesus; and under this example the innumerable and incessant instances of pure heroism (as distinct from mere bravery which is metabiological reversion) can simply be subsumed. Under this law, though perhaps less obviously, falls true asceticism, by which men forgo biological self-perpetuation for metabiological creation. They refuse heirs of their body that they may have heirs of their soul. In this law we find the explanation of the profound appeal by the highest form of literary art, namely tragedy. There is a deep organic response to the revelation that the metabiological endures beyond the biological. Were that not a fact, life would be meaningless and unendurable.

Christianity turns the revelation of this fact into an assurance that for every individual the metabiological endures beyond the biological. The 'resurrection' of Christ is the guarantee of the resurrection of every man and woman. For this there is no warrant; but as a calculus for maintaining 'value' it has obviously been of use. Metabiology recognizes the service, but declares that the need of it is past. No doubt there are millions of people still in the Western world for whom the old argument of Paul holds good: 'If there be no resurrection . . . let us eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow we die'; and millions more, worth more

consideration, to whom the denial of an after-life where their loves endure, seems intolerable. Although the value of this calculus of 'personal immortality' for maintaining value is now a dying value, such values do not die suddenly. Their death can only be accomplished by the emergence of more and more individuals who let them die within themselves. Such individuals are those who see clearly that the metabiological endures beyond the biological, and determine to seek their own immortality as significant variations by perpetuating the living values in themselves.

No man can be secure of his own immortality. No man can be sure that he will be proved to have been, five hundred years hence, a significant variation. But no man who sees what we are trying to show will care. What a man can do is to understand the pattern of the variations to which he himself is responsive, and conform himself to that. In other words, he can see the nature of the men who have won the only kind of immortality about which he cares, and do his utmost to let it re-emerge in a new form in him. Whether he fails or succeeds, he will not be there to know.

None the less, though it is true that the metabiological endures beyond the biological, it is also true that the biological is the necessary substrate of the metabiological. The metabiological and the biological are continuous with one another, and worthy of one another. When the metabiological

presumes to despise the biological – when the Soul is contemptuous or scornful of the Body – then we may be sure that true metabiological unity has not been achieved. To sacrifice the Body is one thing, to scorn it quite another. What value was there ever in the sacrifice of a thing despised? To love life and sacrifice it is to maintain Life in the supreme degree; to scorn life is simply an offence against life. This is no new wisdom; it is a fixed and certain part of the teaching of 'the gluttonous man and the wine-bibber', whose disciples 'fasted not'. The substance of that teaching was that it was better to be whole than to be good, and that, therefore, to be whole was to be good, and to be good something different.

§ 3

Metabiological unity is continuous with biological unity. The unity of both together must be true and organic. The difficulty of enunciating this simple and obvious truth has led to the denunciation of many who have proclaimed it, from Jesus to D. H. Lawrence, as immoral body-worshippers. If others to-day could only achieve as much spirit by worshipping the body as D. H. Lawrence has done, it would be well with the world. But in a world where organic response is woefully deficient, there is a danger in such denunciations as those of D. H. Lawrence. They appear to stress the biological at the cost of the metabiological. This is

mainly appearance. What they actually do is to stress the biological, vehemently, exaggeratedly even, in exasperation at the false metabiological, which would exalt the Soul above the Body and separate them utterly. The false-metabiological is sheer perversion and desecration of the metabiological; and no doubt it is hard for those who discern the unctuous sacrilege to restrain themselves from exasperation and excessive vehemence. But, in allowing themselves to be exasperated, they shew that even they, seers of genius though they are, have lapsed from the true metabiological. To a complete metabiological unity exasperation is impossible.

Since no man ever lived without being exasperated at some moment, it follows that no man has ever maintained metabiological unity all the while. The Jesus who declared that men must resist not evil, that they might become sons of their Father, who makes his sun to shine upon good men and bad, and his rain to fall upon the just and the unjust, was the same Jesus who cursed the fig-tree and furiously drove the harmless tradesmen from the Temple. The strain of teaching metabiological unity to an uncomprehending, and maintaining it against a hostile world, was suddenly too great for him. Not otherwise with those who have been his followers, of whom the most striking at this present moment is D. H. Lawrence, however vehemently he might repudiate the simple truth. The strain of being a

new man in an old world is terrible and any exasperation at the inertia which fails to respond is intelligible. Still, it remains true that exasperation is incompatible with metabiological unity. To preach such unity in anger is to cease for the period of anger to manifest it. For metabiological unity depends upon the acceptance of the pure phenomenon; upon the effective knowledge that the world, at any time, is as good as it can be.

It is, in fact, owing to his failure to work out the implications of his own instinctive or intuitive rightness that so significant a variation as D. H. Lawrence does not arouse the complete organic response from the world which he desires, and which is justly due to him. His denunciation of intellectualism, his exaltation of the primitive and instinctive, are at once both right and wrong. To insist upon the truth of the biological against the falsity of the false metabiological, which scorns or is superior to the biological, is absolutely right and abundantly necessary; but to reject the true metabiological with the false, to confuse them and to obscure the distinction between them, is wrong. Because he fails to make the essential distinction, D. H. Lawrence will not see that it is not merely impossible, but also undesirable, that Europe should begin all over again. He may believe sincerely, though it must be difficult for him to believe completely, that life in the Western world has taken the wrong turning; but he should be enough of a

'naturalist' to know that there is no going back. We cannot, and since we cannot, we ought not reject our intellectual heritage. We must push forward through our intellectualism, not try wildly and impossibly to recoil backward from it. Not by discarding elements that have become essential in our being shall we make significant variations of ourselves. To mutilate the metabiological, of which the intellectual is a necessary part, in order to re-establish the biological is not the way to organic unity. In our unity the metabiological in its fullness must be maintained together with the biological in its fullness. That is to say, D. H. Lawrence is a prophet, and a great one; but he is not a wise man. Our modern prophet must be wise.

It is significant of D. H. Lawrence, that he has never squarely faced Christianity or its founder. He fulminates against Christian 'meekness' and Christian 'love'; and the perversions of the integral virtue of Jesus against which he fulminates are assuredly noxious. They deserve to be blasted by his vituperation. But he has never dared to make the effort to decide whether this 'meekness' or this 'love' were really in the man Jesus. I say he has never dared, not because I believe myself to be more courageous than he – I know perfectly well that I have neither his courage nor his genius – but because I believe that he has been instinctively aware that the attempt to decide about Jesus would be truly perturbing to himself. Whereas I am in no

danger of discovering that I am like the founder of Christianity; D. H. Lawrence veritably is. He happens to be more like him than any man who has lived for the past fifty years, unless perchance it were that other anti-Christian, Friedrich Nietzsche.

This instinctive refusal to face the reality of Jesus, which may be frequently observed in men who manifest more than an average share of the values which he manifested, has two deplorable consequences. First, it leads to a denial of that continuity, which is the reality of human life. We have tried to show, in detail, what Christianity has been: it is not a simple thing; but it can be simply described as an acceptance of the fact of the man Jesus, and a complete and coherent explanation, in modes of thought no longer natural to us, of his emergence and significance. To refuse honestly to consider him, because of the instinctively apprehended danger that one may turn out to be like him, is for a man of fundamentally religious genius like D. H. Lawrence to cut oneself off from the organic process of which Jesus is an essential part, and to risk an ultimate starvation. Lawrence is not a Hopi Indian, nor even a potential Quetzalcoatl, and in his blood (of which he is fond of talking) he knows it well; but he is very like a great prophet in the continuity of Jesus, with a message essentially the same and with a comparable power of dynamic utterance. He, far more than other men, is directly aware of the profound organic unity of life. A snake might be

his sister, and a baby tortoise his child. But that the organic unity is metabiological no less than biological he will not admit; and one cause of that refusal is a strange shrinking from the true self-knowledge that would be forced upon him were he to face the fact of Jesus. The excessive vehemence of his assertion of the biological, is the measure of his suppression of the metabiological. He exalts the Body, because he is afraid to acknowledge the nature of his Soul.

Some consideration of D. H. Lawrence as pure phenomenon is necessary to a book such as this. He, more clearly than any other living man, has uttered the truths which it endeavours to expound; yet he has done more than any man to obscure them. He knows everything; but himself he will not know. By his obstinate attempt to drive a wedge between the biological and the metabiological, he has retarded the growth not merely of the doctrine but of the reality of organic unity. He has presented organic unity, against his better knowledge, as opposed to and independent of metabiological achievement. As he represents it, organic unity is metabiological reversion. Hence, the profundity of his conscious pessimism: there is no hope whatever for Western humanity. Fortunately, the unconsciousness in his writing is truer than the consciousness, and the organic response he awakens in those capable of responding to him is deeper than their repulsion from the conscious conclusions he would enforce upon them. There is in his writings a chasm between

what he is, and what he says he is; the former is truth, the latter self-deception.

This, then, in some sense, is a book that D. H. Lawrence should have written. Had he written it, not only would it have been a far better book; but it might, by its own dynamic utterance, have produced an immediacy of conviction which I am unable to create. But since it appears to discover itself as my function in life to do what other men might have done far better, but which they refuse to do at all, I have to resign myself to my own disability.

§ 4

The organic unity of man is both biological and metabiological. It is implicit in his true metabiological unity that it should exist in a self-awareness of the continuity between itself and the biollogical unity, on whose being it depends. That the metabiological should dictate to the biological is intolerable: such unity is forced and mechanical, and can only end in a final disruption. But it is equally intolerable that the metabiological should violate itself in obedience to the biological. The morality of self-violation, whether the self be biological or metabiological, can no longer endure or be endured. Into its place must come the morality of self-resolution into unity.

The phrase is not easy, and the process it is meant

to convey is not easily described. It is best described perhaps by implication, by insistence upon what it is not. It is not enforced submission of the biological to the metabiological, nor of the metabiological to the biological. Its ideal is a perfect and active harmony between them. If that seems to be discrepant with our previous assertion that the metabiological overrides the biological, it is because the best words we have are intolerably clumsy tools for dissecting an intimate organic process such as this we are trying to describe.

In ultimate crisis, the metabiological does override the biological. There are moments when a man must lose his life to save it, not merely in the symbolic, but in the actual sense. But such moments of ultimate crisis are rare. The continuous crisis in which organic life at its ordinary level consists is not an internecine conflict between the metabiological and the biological; but a tension between them. The duty of the metabiological is to recognize the biological, to be familiar with it, and to obey it utterly, *when it ought to be obeyed.* The duty of the biological is to be familiar with the metabiological and to obey it utterly, *when it ought to be obeyed.* The decision of these oughts rests with neither the biological nor the metabiological, but with what is beyond them both; that nucleus of ultimate organic unity which we have described as the organism's self-awareness of itself as a centre of tensions. The function and the life of that nucleus

is the resolution of those tensions. In reality, they resolve themselves. The awareness of their existence, their striving, and their self-resolution is the creative and organic unity of man.

It is hard to be clear, because we have been compelled by necessity of exposition to make a separation in what is continuous. We have distinguished between the metabiological and the biological, which are one. The biological will is to biological self-perpetuation; the metabiological will is to the perpetuation of significant variations. But these wills are not, save in rare conditions of ultimate crisis, discrepant. Self-perpetuation is the condition of the perpetuation of significant variations.

The position is this. The first necessity is metabiological unity; only when emotion and intellect have achieved their own synthesis is the true metabiological will operative. Instead of a will to this or that posited and ideal end, there is a will to pure self-emergence. We learn to wait upon the unknown which we are; we are dedicated to whatever of creative newness may emerge through us. In that condition, and only in that condition, is given the possibility of a true continuity between the metabiological and the biological. There is given the possibility of *complete* self-acceptance; and that is the whole duty of man.

Than complete self-acceptance man can go no further. By taking upon himself the final responsibility, he has reached the point where he has none.

What values he is destined to perpetuate, those will be perpetuated in and through him; what values he is destined to let die, those will die in and through him. He can no more; nor is it conceivable that he should desire more. Whether he has been a significant variation, the organic process will ultimately and irrevocably decide.

§ 5

Perhaps some of the readers of this book will find this a vague and comfortless creed. I am sorry that they should have been inveigled into reading it. The book, I know, is a peculiar one; perhaps it is a book of a new kind. It does, explicitly and consciously, what many far greater books have done before it, implicitly and unconsciously; it presents itself deliberately as significant organic variation. It is for those who find in themselves some organic response to it; and it is for no others. They will forgive its manifold imperfections and clumsinesses, and they will know that its creed is neither vague nor comfortless.

To those who ask: 'What shall I do?' we have finally one simple answer: 'Accept yourself'. To those who ask: 'But when I have accepted myself, what then?' we answer: 'By your question you show that you have read without comprehension.' To those who demur: 'But you say nothing of man's duties – the world problems – peace or war – social

reform – morality,' we reply: 'No, we say nothing of these things. His attitude to these things each man must let his accepted self determine. We have our own attitude to these things, but it is not required to be formulated or defended here. What values a man will perpetuate, what values he can perpetuate, is for himself to decide. We claim no more than perhaps to help him to a condition where these questions decide themselves with a different and higher authority than any imposed decisions of the unintegrated self could ever possess.'

To uphold the necessity, and to indicate the means, of becoming a new man is one thing; to declare the duties of the new man is another. In this regard, as ever, we have no new wisdom to propound. If anyone cares to say that he knew all this before, and that he learned it from the words of a greater authority than we can claim to be: ' Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven, and all these things shall be added unto you', we shall not dream of denying it. If our wisdom were new, it would not be true; if it were not continuous with the wisdom of Jesus, it would lose one of the chief titles to acceptance that it possesses.

But so soon as we have made that frank admission (which has been, after all, implicit throughout the whole) we are compelled to safeguard ourselves. Nothing is more dangerous to-day for an independent thinker than to use the name of Jesus: it procures him false friends, and alienates those who

should be his true ones. Nevertheless, he must take the risk. In such an attempt as this it is inevitable. The complete self-acceptance which is the final formulation of our doctrine involves and depends upon the complete acceptance of ourselves as continuous with Christ and Christianity.

It would be more pleasant, as it would be more fashionable, to cast them both aside. But to accept ourselves means to accept the unpleasant and unfashionable things which we contain, and not to pretend that we do not contain them; and the doctrines of organic continuity means that we must acknowledge our ancestry however disreputable it may be reckoned. To be neither Christian nor ashamed of Christianity is an uncomfortable position, which no man would take unless he were compelled. Eccentricity has no charms, when a man is past his youth. If only we could really cut ourselves off from Christ and Christianity, and forget them, how much more likely that a modern palate, 'framed to sharp sauces,' would relish what is written here!

And yet, in reality, it is because we are determined to forget them, that we are resolved completely to remember them. We will not have Christ and Christianity, in some unconscious disguise, trailing vaporous and unacknowledged about our inward world. We *have* them in our blood, and we must, as conscious beings, decide whether they have the right to be there. We discover that they have, a

great right but a definite one, a right which it is our duty to acknowledge and define. We acknowledge and define it. Henceforward, therefore, we are free. We owe allegiance, and we pay it – to the last farthing: but we pay it as free men.

And there is an end. We have spoken justice, as we believe it, concerning Christ and Christianity: neither less nor more. But what we have said is what we mean, not what other seeming-kindly minds may be foolish enough to imagine we might have said had we been somebody else. We accept Jesus as the most significant variation that has appeared in the organic process of history during the epoch to which we belong; and we accept him in no other capacity whatever. We accept Catholic Christianity as the one complete and coherent effort to explain that phenomenon, and to maintain that variation together with other variations of almost equal significance, which has emerged until our own. Other forms of Christianity than the Catholic seems to us either dishonest or incomplete; either deliberately shy or unwittingly incapable of thinking themselves out. That being our declared conviction, the question whether we are Christian can be decided by one authority alone – the Church of Rome. On this matter we recognize no other competent tribunal.

With that, we have, so far as we humanly can, safeguarded ourselves against misrepresentation on a vital issue. The wisdom of Jesus with which we acknowledge our continuity was simply wisdom.

Because it veritably was wisdom, it was deep and organic, the wisdom of a new man, which created a new life. It was deeper even than his own expression of it, though assuredly that was deep enough; deeper even than the account his conscious mind gave of those acts which flowed from it. He accepted himself. All that was new in him, he accepted. The burden was so great that he created a God to share it; and when the God had served his turn, the God left him, as Hercules left Antony. The God had not betrayed him. No God who enables a great man to accept himself can ever betray him; he has done all that a God can do. For men create their own Gods in their own image, and when they obey them, they obey themselves. Not the little selves of which they are conscious, and which would shrink from destiny and the unknown, but the Self indeed, through which the unknown and uncreated emerges into being.

§ 6

God has played many parts; but this is the greatest of them. He has enabled a new man to share the burden of his own newness. But the time comes when men can watch the rise and fall of Gods. The image of the new man is thrown for a life-time, or the composite image of many new men is thrown for an epoch, upon the background of the heavens. Humanity strains after it, and perpetuates the

newness which the image embodies and authorizes. Thus for a time, it solves the mystery. For the mystery of life is always the same: the birth of the new creation. In all but men, the mystery is self-accomplished; but in man it seems to depend upon his consent and his knowledge. It is not really so. He, no less than the veriest animal, works under destiny. He must create the new man, or he will die. But how to obey the urge to new creation? He need not worry; the new creation will force itself to birth. But he must worry; for mind and heart are integral to the organism which he is. This is the eternal paradox of human life, by knowing which we touch as near as we may the secret pulse of the unknown life of which we are the momentary vehicles.

To know that the purpose of life is self-accomplished no less in man than in the animal: this, and nothing else, is the finality of human wisdom. The form the knowledge has taken for many centuries is faith in the Christian God. Since he enabled the mystery of self-creation to be accomplished in man; he solved the problem of life; he made man obedient to his own newness. Now God is become impossible for many men. That is their newness. But the need which God served still endures. Men have still to be made obedient to their own newness. Still, and for ever, their eyes must see their salvation.

They cannot say: 'Since the purpose of life is self-accomplished in man, we will concern ourselves no more about it. Whether we will or no, what will

be, will be.' That sounds simple, because it is simply false. The purpose of life which is being self-accomplished in man manifestly includes that he shall be more and more concerned about it. If, having reached the point where he is profoundly concerned about it, he can annihilate in himself the concern which he feels, well and good. Each man for himself, and each for life. If a deliberate lapse into unconsciousness is possible, and if life indeed requires it, then it is a variation that will maintain itself, and books like this, and men like me, and greater books than this, and greater men than me, will fall into oblivion. But if the deliberate lapse into unconsciousness is not possible (as we believe it is not possible) then those who proclaim it as necessity are self-deceived. There are two ways of annihilating in ourselves our concern for the purpose of life; and they have chosen the wrong one. It is wrong, simply because it is impossible.

The other way is to push on and on; to be still more concerned about the purpose of life, to be God-deniers in the supreme degree. Others will pause on the path. They will accept something, which we will not accept. They will say: 'Let this be God, or that be God.' Or they will say: 'Who cares now for Religion? Let the dead bury their dead.' They will say these things, and they will believe them. It is well. We observe them as pure phenomena, and go our way. Whether we are the significant variations or they, time alone will show.

We cannot help believing that Life is on our side, for we have only followed where it led. But we may be mistaken? Of course, but what then? Who cares? We are ourselves and not others. If Life chooses not to remember us, we shall not be there to grieve.

We obey our destiny. We deny God, and we will to deny him utterly. Because we are truly so determined, we discover that we cannot deny him, unless we know what he is, and was. We discover that he was once the necessary means to make man obedient to his own newness; and we discover that the need endures. The need endures, but the means does not endure. What then shall we do? Shall we create a God whom we know to be no God? That is impossible. A God whom we know to be no God can never satisfy the need.

There is but one way now. To see, directly and without means, that men *are* obedient to their own newness. They cannot help themselves. That is how Life works; that is Life. And we, who have struggled to reach so far, have simply been obedient to the newness of ourselves. That newness was not our own newness; it was the newness of many men before us, to which we responded, and which we could not but strive to perpetuate. The newness in ourselves was simply the blind resolution to perpetuate in ourselves newnesses which had not been perpetuated together before us. This new harmony of newness is our creation, and we can take no credit

for it. To see that it is veritably our own is to see that it is not ours at all.

'Whose then is it?' some may say, 'for the answer will be God.' The answer used to be God, but it is so no longer. The answer is, if you will, the organic process of life. That may, for all we know, be only a metaphor. What if it be? It happens to be, at this point of time, the simplest description of the facts as we directly see them. If others can see them thus simply, then our description will have the appeal of an obvious accuracy; in the words of the old hymn, 'Faith will vanish into sight.' Admittedly, what we offer is either a tremendous simplification, or tremendous nonsense. To some, we hope, it will be childishly simple; to others, we are sure, it will be incomprehensible.

But it would be manifestly ridiculous to make use of our new description of the facts to give substance to the fast-emptying concept of God. The origin, the fullness, and the decay of that concept is part of the facts which we describe. God has risen out of the incarnate God, whom we describe as significant variation; out of the eternal values, which we describe as not eternal, but inherent in and inseparable from the significant variations in which they emerge; out of the need of the logical universal, which we describe as inherent in and inseparable from the particular in which it is given; out of the mystical experience, which we describe as the biological unity of life become momentarily self-aware

in an individual man. In all these ways, God was a means of description of the pure phenomenon. We now describe the pure phenomenon without him. It is fantastic that our description of the pure phenomenon should be used as a means of describing anew the description which it supersedes.

9

THE PURE PHENOMENON

§ 1

God is one means of description; organism is another. Since the pure phenomenon described has not greatly changed, there is a relation between the one means of description and the other; just as men, if they are curious to inquire, will find a relation between astrology and any psychology that is complete enough to describe the real facts of experience. Human nature has not greatly changed; and the proportion of wise men to fools is pretty much the same as ever. When the wise men among the Chaldeans (if it was they who created astrology) set about describing the varieties of human nature by the aid of the stars and constellations, their main purpose was accuracy in description. It is strange to us that they used the stars for their calculus; it is becoming strange that men should have used God as a calculus to describe the whole of phenomena. But if we have imagination enough to accept for the moment the Chaldean calculus of the stars, we discover that the astrological classification of humanity came pretty close – a good deal closer than much modern psychology – to the observed facts of experience. So with the infinitely superior calculus of the Christian God; if we have imagination

enough to accept it for a moment in its most stringent and comprehensive form, we discover that the Christian description of the universe came far closer than is suspected by many men of science and enlightenment, to an accurate description of all the facts which have to be described.

God is a calculus for accurate description. The calculus is no longer acceptable; we are too conscious of the irrational surd which it contains. We need a simpler calculus; but we shall not get it by simplifying the facts of human experience, as many men are satisfied to do. The facts are adamantine. By simplifying them we obtain a result which has no human meaning. The complexity of the facts must first be acknowledged; then we can set about our business of simplifying the calculus if we can.

We have simplified the calculus. The calculus we use is 'organism.' If anyone chooses to say that 'God' is the simpler calculus, because, for one thing, it contains three letters instead of eight, we willingly allow him the pleasure of his victory. But if the insistence upon God becomes more serious, we meet it not with a mere refusal, but with an insuperable difficulty. The new calculus explains God, but God cannot explain the new calculus. The new calculus includes the old; the old does not include the new. The new calculus satisfies the law of intellectual economy: *Entia non sunt multiplicanda praeter necessitatem.*

Of course, if men insist on God, no matter what he

means or is or does – and a great deal of modern 'theology' seems to arise from this insistence – if, in short, they are content to stuff a venerable but now empty word, with the only kind of meaning the modern mind will allow it to bear, they can get God out of anything. Whatever their philosophy or their science allows for reality will be God. They are welcome to him: but they must be prepared to find it awkward when they wish to worship him or pray to him. Probably, they do find it awkward, and worse than awkward. I speak from experience, for there have been moments in my life when I would have given my very soul to have had a God to pray to; when I sought him in loneliness and bitterness and despair. I could not find him then. I do not need him now. Whatever God I found, or whatever God found me, he was not one I could pray to or worship: he was one whom I must simply seek to know. I believe that now at last I do know him. He is mysterious and vast, mighty and intimate; but he is not God.

I know, or I think I know, as well as most men, the hunger of the human soul for God. If by denying him, I denied the reality and significance of that hunger, I should be in my own eyes contemptible. I have been, as much as any man I have known, beset by that hunger, so hard beset, indeed, that I have insisted that God for me shall be a reality. And by a reality, I mean a reality. God for me shall be as real as that woman or that child whom I have

loved. Nothing less will do. Why should it? I have never desired to be made comfortable; I have never been troubled by the will to believe. My own experience of life was certain. I did not require God as a hypothesis to explain it. There have been things in that experience that a drunken bar-loafer would not have inflicted upon a dog. The more we are bludgeoned, the more we cry for a meaning. A painful life makes a man a God-seeker; let it be only painful enough, and he will assuredly become a God-finder also.

I have been, by this compulsion, a God-seeker and a God-finder, and a God-denier. I deny him more gladly than I found him, though the finding was glad enough. There are many ways of denying God. Against most of them, I think, I should be compelled, like Rousseau at the party of 'philosophes,' to declare: '*Et moi, messieurs, je crois en Dieu.*' Indeed, I am sure there is only one way of denying God which would not rouse me to that same assertion. That one way is written here. The mist of God disperses to reveal the wonder of the things that simply are.

§ 2

Our calculus for the description of the things which simply are might be reduced to a word almost as simple as 'God' – namely, 'Life.' With the point of actual emergence of that which is currently

distinguished as 'life' we are not greatly concerned, because we believe it will never be found. The universal process, as we see and imagine it, is strictly continuous; and just as it is impossible to determine at what point 'consciousness' emerges, so it is impossible to indicate the point of emergence of 'life' in the familiar sense. There is no distinguishable dividing line between the living and the non-living. The emergence of biological life presents no more of a problem than the emergence of consciousness. The 'life in the broadest sense' of Goethe, under which we include all phenomena, is pre-biological, biological, and metabiological, and these phases are strictly continuous.

The evolutionary hypothesis has maintained itself since its first formulation as the simplest description of the known facts of biological life. The controversy between the Darwinians and the Lamarckians seems to us a matter of comparatively small significance, – a misunderstanding due to the logical difficulties of formulating the evolutionary description. The question: How do variations emerge? is one of those ultimate questions which are incapable of being answered save by metaphor. We may say, after Samuel Butler, that life gets into a tight place and manages to escape from it. No logical description of the process is possible. But simple imagination enables us to picture it. The first water-animal who in a breathless flight from some devouring monster managed to propel himself into

safety by scrabbling a few yards with his flappers on to a sand-bank, made a beginning with the variation known as feet. At another time a land-animal, in much the same extremity, managed to make a jump into the air and save himself in the branches of a tree. One spasmodic stretch of his forelegs made all the difference between death and life: and those stretched forelegs were the beginning of the variation called wings. We are actually so accustomed to infinite newness in life, that the logical impossibility of defining such achievements does not hinder us in the least from picturing them or knowing them as real. Nor have we the faintest difficulty in seeing how such variations maintain themselves.

By a quite simple extension of this evolutionary description of the biological phase of life it is made to include the metabiological phases. Every human invention is, essentially, as much a biological variation as the flappers that were once started on the way to becoming feet. The mere physical separation between the invention and the inventor, though it looms so large in our customary vision, is to a simpler inspection accidental and unessential. The aeroplane is a variation just as organic to the original inventor, as the first handy stone grasped by Pithecanthropus; and the process by which the aeroplane variation is transmitted to and 'inherited' by the innumerable persons who use it belongs, as appears by the same simple inspection (the *anschauliche Urteilskraft* of Goethe), to the same essential

order as any other biological transmission and inheritance. What we call 'consciousness' is simply a condition of the organism which enables variations to be transmitted and inherited without submitting to the slow process of gestation and birth. Instead of the aeroplane inventor having to wait to beget another little aeroplane inventor with a like power of levitation, other adult organisms tumble to the idea. They imitate his invention. That is to say, they imitate him. That is to say, they absorb organically the variation which has emerged in him.

So with all metabiological variations. We call them metabiological because they belong to the phase which follows the biological in the time order. What distinguishes the metabiological is the apparent intervention of 'consciousness' in the biological process. The process is fundamentally just as biological as before, but the tempo is changed because of the simple fact that 'consciousness' permits the transmission and inheritance of variations to take place independently of the old and necessary process of new biological birth. We use the term 'metabiological' in order to lay due emphasis upon the absolute continuity between this phase and the biological.

There can be no question of the supersession of the biological by the metabiological. The metabiological obviously must always have the pure biological for its substrate; but instead of the pure biological determining the tempo of the organic

process, the metabiological marks a phase in which the transmission and inheritance of variations is no longer compelled to pass through the pure biological. Not only can variations be transmitted from living adult to living adult; but they can likewise be transmitted over a lapse of centuries in which there is no pure biological descent at all. I can be deeply moved by an old book containing the speculations of some completely forgotten mind. That book is integral to the organic variation which was the ancient author. There is no pure biological continuity between us; there are not even any metabiological links between us. I inherit a latent metabiological variation.

It seems there is only one way of unifying the facts thus simply described. They are, of course, being unified for description only. Simple description is our single aim. These facts are unified by describing the metabiological phase as a new order of organic unity. The biological organisms called men are not merely biologically related to one another, but they are also metabiologically related; and these metabiological relations are not merely contemporaneous, but to some considerable extent quite independent of biological contemporaneity. Past variations can be transmitted and inherited. In other words, the emergence of the metabiological has established a new, but still essentially organic unity, between the present and the past. In the metabiological phase, the world itself becomes

organism, by virtue of the metabiological relations between biological units. The world is organism, conscious of its past, and conscious of its living continuity with its past. This organic self-consciousness of the world necessarily emerges only in the biological units who are fully aware of the metabiological relations that now obtain in the larger unity. This self-consciousness of the world as organism communicates itself, by metabiological process, through the world-organism; it is conveyed from individual to individual as these respond to and thus maintain the variation in which the self-consciousness of the world-organism has emerged. In other words a nucleus of complete self-consciousness is created within the world-organism, which will grow or die, in so far as other units in the world organism are responsive or recalcitrant to it. We hope it will grow. It appears that it ought to grow. But since metabiological inheritance may be quite independent of biological contemporaneity, there is no sound reason for expecting that its growth should be immediate. It may also be quite abortive.

§ 3

So much by way of simple description of the sequence of pure phenomena. We do not claim that the language of the simple description is simple. On the contrary, we are well aware that it is unpleasantly cumbersome. If a convenient language

were available for the underlying conception, there would be no need to write this book; for the conception itself would then be proved familiar. Simple is not the same as familiar. 'God' as calculus for description is exceedingly familiar, and infinitely complex; 'organism in evolution' as calculus for description of the whole of phenomena is exceedingly unfamiliar, yet it is, we believe, quite simple.

And it is, we also believe, quite complete. Whatever logical objections may be taken to the status of the 'pure phenomenon' cannot establish themselves against the simple theory of knowledge which is implicit in this description. Knowledge is organic response, which manifests itself in various modes. We can, by simple inspection, watch it evolving from a primary organic response, and at bottom it retains this fundamental nature. The modes of organic response are subtly differentiated at the metabiological level, where the specific intellectual mode accompanies the instinctive and intuitive modes which are still clearly recognizable as organic. But so soon as we realize that language, even in its most abstract forms, is merely a metabiological 'prolongation' of physical gesture, and is essentially a means by which otherwise indistinguishable organic attitudes differentiate themselves and become available objects for organic response, the difficulties raised by any intellectual theory of knowledge to our fundamental conception disappear. Truth, like any other 'value,' is inherent in

any organic gesture in the intellectual mode which maintains itself, and cannot be separated from the gesture in which it inheres without ultimate self-contradiction.

Knowledge, that is to say, is in fact always immediate, and in the form of contact and response. The most adequate knowledge of reality we achieve is when the organism is in biological and metabiological harmony; when in the complex conditions which obtain on the metabiological level organic unity has re-established itself. That is to say, when there is a nucleus of self-awareness of the organism as organism responding by various modes simultaneously and indistinguishably. The condition which is sometimes described as 'pure contemplation' probably belongs to this order – a condition in which we are conscious, in contemplating the most ordinary and trivial object, of its indefeasible uniqueness and of the 'wonder' of its sheer existence. This is that 'awe before the pure phenomenon,' which Goethe tried to describe, and which (if we are not mistaken) gives ontological ultimacy in Mr. Santayana's metaphysic. It is, in our description, pure and total organic contact with the real.

Obviously, there can be no self-knowledge of this same order. A pure and total organic contact with oneself is logically impossible. As deliberate metaphor, the phrase may stand. But, in fact, pure self-knowledge is given only in act; perhaps pre-eminently in such an act of organic response to the

pure phenomenon as we have been describing. That is to say, we can only know the self after, never during, a pure act in which the self is completely manifest. Self-knowledge supervenes upon abeyance of the conscious self; necessarily, because the conscious self is not the Self. The Self is known only in the memory of such a pure act: in the moment of memory of the act there is a temporary and necessary disintegration of the organic unity of the Self then given.

But self-knowledge in the common and practical sense of the word, is attained when true organic unity is seen to be the necessary condition of a pure act. This act is self-creation; it is the nucleus of a new metabiological variation emergent in the world-organism. When the acts confirm themselves into a pattern, the variation may be said to have established itself in the individual, and he becomes a centre of potential response in the metabiological mode from the world-organism. Life has made a new path for its own emergence.

10

BEYOND RESPONSIBILITY

§ 1

We repeat, there is nothing essentially new in all this. The only thing that may be really new about it is the degree of consciousness with which it is expressed. It is, so to speak, religious wisdom transposed into the key of a pure and complete naturalism.

Morality, like everything else on this simple scheme, takes care of itself. Variations are significant when they maintain themselves, that is, when the world-organism, has shown by continuous response that it wants them. But if anyone thinks that because the facts are thus simply described, the individual who accepts the description is absolved from what is called the moral struggle, he is self-convicted of obtuseness. For such a man, or for critics who are tempted to use such arguments, this book is not intended.

Just as before, it lies with the individual to decide what variations he will strive to perpetuate. This is, if you like, his moral duty. The point on which we insist is that he cannot help himself. He is merely a self-conscious organism responding by metabiological modes to previous or present variations. If he thinks that this is a degrading conception, we

cannot prevent him. For ourselves, we find it distinctly inspiring. But that may be because we are oddly constituted. If he thinks or says that this is determinism, we can only reply that he is not near to understanding the central conception of the book.

There is no possible connection between organic self-creation and determinism. Determinism rests on that mechanistic view of the world which we have totally rejected save as a calculus for a certain limited investigation into a Universe from which man, as man, and organism as organism, have been excluded. Equally, there is no possible connection between organic self-creation and free will.

The freedom of the will is an adolescent fiction. One might adapt the famous saying of Rousseau, and declare that: Man is born with the idea that he is free, and he grows up to discern that he is always in chains. In whatever terms it may have been formulated, a crucial moment in man's knowledge of his own nature has always been the realization that he is not free, and that his real as opposed to his apparent freedom begins with this admission. This moment of self-knowledge is generally supposed to be religious; that is because religion has possessed a virtual monopoly of true psychology, and that again is because the Christian scheme was the only complete description of reality the world possessed for a very long period indeed. But precisely the same realization can be witnessed in the thrill of exaltation of a Lucretius in his discovery of

atomistic determinism. There is a large apparent difference between the idiom of 'prevenient grace' and that of the causally determined *corpuscula* of Lucretius; but any calculus is good enough provided the mind which uses it is sane enough to recognize the facts which have to be described by it. Actually, the realization that freedom, for the individual, consists in the acknowledgment that he is not free, is quite indifferently religious or scientific. It is a moment of true self-knowledge, which has to be recognized in some form or other in any system of psychology that is not perfunctory and unreal.

It may seem strange that this acknowledgment by the individual of the illusory nature of his belief in the freedom of the will should always produce an immense actual liberation; but it will seem strange, we think, only to those who still slumber in the illusion itself. For obviously, if it is true that man is not really free, his acknowledgment of the fact will relieve him of the burden of so-called 'responsibility,' which is, in the main, a feverish anxiety to decide with the intellectual consciousness issues which cannot be so decided. Then the organism is in a state of continual and fruitless self-perturbation, in which it cannot genuinely function as a whole. Remove the cause of this self-perturbation and self-frustration, and a sense of real freedom is immediately attained. The nightmare of false 'responsibility' is banished, and we taste the repose of unimpeded activity.

The moment that we realize that the individual is an organism, and that it is his duty to become a complete organism, the paradox of 'freedom' is plain. For obviously freedom lies in the free functioning of the organism as a whole; and that free functioning of the organism *as a whole*, in the judgment of the intellectual consciousness, cannot be freedom. In the eyes of the intellect such freedom is bondage, for it can only be operative when the intellect has abdicated its sovereignty. In other words, 'freedom of the will' is an intellectual conception of a reality which is organic. It is therefore necessarily partial and false. In order to approximate to truth it has to be completed by its contradiction – Determinism.

The reality which is clumsily described by this intellectual antinomy is simple: Organism, and organic response. The organism is not free to choose that to which it will respond. The metabiological complication of 'consciousness' hides this elementary fact; and in individuals in whom the metabiological responses are predominantly in the intellectual mode the fact may continue to be hidden. But if a man allows free scope to the responses which are more nearly organic – the biological response of love and the metabiological response of artistic admiration, for example, – he quickly learns the untruth of the intellectual report that he *chose* to respond to this or that. He is more likely to feel that this or that chose him, and his

metaphor would be nearer to the mark. The simple fact is that organic response is primary and unanalysable. We can watch it in operation, we know ourselves as wholly conditioned by its working; but it belongs to the order of the pure phenomenon, beyond which we cannot go, and beyond which, having reached it, we have no desire to go.

When, therefore, we speak of the moment 'when we "realize" that the individual is an organism, and that it is his duty to become a complete organism,' it is no intellectual cognition of which we speak. There is no possibility of 'realization' on the intellectual mode so long as that mode conceives itself as autonomous. 'Realization' is organic response in the metabiological level; that is to say, organic response which is self-aware of its own nature. Intellectual cognition is also, by definition, organic response; but it is organic response which is definitely unaware of its own nature. Only when it relinquishes its pretensions to autonomy, can it become what it should be, the necessary collaborator in the act of full 'realization.'

In order to 'realize' that the individual is an organism, therefore, mere theoretical recognition cannot suffice. It is not the idea but the reality of organism with which we must make our contact; and that contact of 'realization' is possible only through an organic disposition of ourselves. So that 'to realize that the individual is an organism' and 'to realize that it is his duty to become a complete

organism' are, in reality, the same act. The category of moral duty has been imported, to meet the needs of discourse, into a category to which it has strictly no relevance. Actually, the full realization that the individual is an organism necessitates being oneself a complete organism. In the wisdom of Jesus, it runs: 'To him that hath it shall be given. . . .'

That hard saying contains the ultimate paradox of true morality. The saying itself is comprehensible only by organic response; and it can have a real place only in a system in which organic response, on the metabiological level, by whatever calculus it be described, is fundamental. The system of Jesus was such a system; the system of Catholic Christianity was another such system; this is another.

§ 2

The conscious man, by which we mean the individual who is self-aware of himself as organic whole, realizes with relief that he is not responsible for the choice of the variations to which he responds. The road to this ultimate disburthening of responsibility lies through the self-avowal of one's own responses. To acknowledge one's responses only when they operate in a predetermined mode is the way to starvation. That the denial of the biological response by the emotional or intellectual may lead not only to inward frustration, but to an almost ineradicable self-deception, is a commonplace of

modern psychology. It is excellent that this should be recognized; but it is less excellent that it should not be also recognized that the denial of the emotional or intellectual responses is equally pernicious. What are called the 'higher' responses are supposed, by much modern psychology, to be less real and more illusory than the pure biological response. If we have succeeded in making it plain that the 'higher' responses are no less real, and no less in need of frank acknowledgment than any others, we have not written in vain. The metabiological is just as biological as the biological itself.

Conscious man is required to acknowledge all the responses of which he is capable. Such acknowledgment is the very definition of the 'conscious' man. And that is no conscious acknowledgment which shudders away from, or feels pride in, some one or other of the responses which it purports to acknowledge. The conscious man simply acknowledges that he is the destined meeting-ground for such and such responses, and none is more excellent, or more deplorable than another. They simply are, and he simply is the locus where these conflicting responses shall find their ultimate resolution. On the variety of his responses and the comprehensiveness of his acknowledgment of them depends the richness o. the self which will emerge from them.

This is, no doubt, the very apotheosis of amorality. We do not deny it. In our description of reality the moral category cannot be ultimate. It is itself a

thing to be described; not a means of description. The moral response is just as organic as the biological. When man cannot help what he does, he ceases to be a 'moral being.' Which is a very pernicious doctrine. But the world-organism is so admirably devised that those who might be depraved by it will not believe it; and those who will believe it will be rather better than they were before, because they will cease to plume themselves on a goodness which is not theirs.

More than this, the task of maintaining himself as a locus for the free resolution of conflicting responses will make a far greater demand upon a man's 'moral' energy than any that has been made before. For the good man to realize that it is better to be whole than to be good is to enter on a strait and narrow path compared to which his previous rectitude was flowery licence. To have no more responsibility for oneself is to become incessantly responsible; and from the place where that paradox has meaning it is easy to discern that what is called moral responsibility is only a somewhat crooked expedient for avoiding all real responsibility whatever.

What life requires of men is something quite other than to be good. Good men are always forgotten. Life has small use for them. The men who are remembered as good, were in fact something quite different. Goodness is a little haze of sentimental fiction which we sometimes conspire to

throw over the more forbidding quality of the significant variation. 'Why callest thou me good?' Ask his contemporary connoisseurs in goodness what they thought of the goodness of the man of Nazareth; he appeared to them the villain manifest. They were wrong; but we get no nearer to the right by simply reversing the verdict. The new man is never good, or he would never be new. Goodness is, at the very best, a somewhat tenuous distillation of values that have been separated from the variations in which they were embodied. It has, as it were, fallen out of the direct organic succession, and its relation to the new man when he comes is like the relation of the prevailing academic concept of beauty to the new work of art, when it appears. The new man, in short, is never good, but he is always shocking.

That, as usual, will be held to open the way to an outbreak of conscious 'shockingness.' The new man wills to shock nobody; he does not even will to be new: he wills to be whole. In the integrity of his own desire for integrity, he acts, and utters himself. Then he discovers that he is shocking. His simple truths are simple enormities. Nobody, he then discovers with surprise and pain, is shocked at the things which are shocking to him: at self-deceptions, at mean connivances, at palpable hypocrisies; but they are shocked at him.

When he discovers that he is shocking, the new man is often shocked. That is because he is not yet

detached from his own newness. Because he knows that he is true, he has imagined that all men must accept his truth. That is a mistake; which is, fortunately, becoming less easy to make than it used to be. If it were not so, Messiahs of one kind or another would be on the increase. The last new man who is known to have died in the full Messianic illusion was Friedrich Nietzsche, who thereby showed that he was not so wise as he ought to have been; but that was nearly fifty years ago. It is required of a new man, nowadays, that he should be detached from his newness; in short, that a new kind of newness should be realized in him.

Of the new man we may say that he will cease to be shocked, or even deeply disappointed, that men are shocked at him. He will not be angry because they still profess lip-service to the ideal, and seek to suppress him in its name. He will note the fact, without anger or indignation, that the ideals which they profess to serve he really has served, and is serving to the uttermost by his labour to abolish them. Curious facts of this kind – which will be legion – he will observe with disinterested contemplation. He will see that it must needs be so, and that he was young indeed to have expected it to be otherwise; for the time for prophecy is past, and the time for wisdom has arrived. It is not that the world is old; it is probably very, very young: but it seems to be at the end of one phase and at the beginning of another. The signs are now multiplying that

the intellect is becoming dubious of its own sufficiency.

That justified dubiety, which is quite different from mere scepticism, is bound, we believe, to have an important effect upon the status of religion; and an effect quite other than that which is generally anticipated. Scepticism of the intellect is generally supposed to make way for a revival of religion. There is a pathetically eager welcome for the physicist or the logician who dallies with the notion that there may be something (even very much) in mysticism. This dalliance, which is like the rather clumsy dilettantism of the amateur of the arts who begins collecting when he has made his pile, is interpreted as a weakening of science and a potential strengthening of religion. We believe the interpretation, at least on the positive side, is quite mistaken.

There is, perhaps, a weakening of science; but this weakening is only temporary. It will be followed, we believe, by a new and successful effort to expand its own conceptions and criticize its naive epistemology. When that is done, the way will be open for the real, as distinct from the illusory, reconciliation of religion and science. A science will arise which will recognize religion for the majestic thing it is, not for the puerile thing which it is not. But this recognition of religion will not involve any acceptance of religion. Religion will have no more mortal enemy than the science

which exerts itself to sympathize with and understand it; for that science will automatically replace religion, in the hearts and minds of those who follow it.

In other words, the real ally of religion is a rigid and unbending intellectualism; for that is humanly so incomplete, and indeed intellectually so unsatisfying that it is bound to cause a reaction towards religious faith. Faith is, indeed, the logical end of intellectualism. So long as intellectualism rules the roost (even in a rabidly anti-religious guise) the Church may be glad, for the weary intellectual will assuredly succumb in one generation or another to the mighty paradoxes of Christianity. But when the intellect begins to be dubious, not of its consequences, but of its origins, then let religion beware.

It is a hundred years since Goethe wrote his pregnant epigram:

**Wer Kunst und Wissenschaft besitzt,*
Hat auch Religion;
Wer jene beide nicht besitzt,
Der habe Religion!

In those hundred years a good deal has happened, and it has happened as Goethe foresaw. The evolutionary hypothesis has established itself as a

*'The man who possesses Art and Science, possesses Religion also: the man who has neither of these, is the man for Religion.'

calculus of description; and the physical sciences have become conscious of that inherent incompleteness which made Goethe a little contemptuous of their self-confidence. Whether or not the point of view of Goethe himself has yet made many converts, some of the conditions indispensable to this conversion have been fulfilled. To-day no mind that is careful of its own integrity can repose for long in the barren illusion of a mechanic man in a mechanic universe without a deep dissatisfaction. From this deep dissatisfaction there are, we believe, only two ways of emerging: one leads to the paradoxes of a complete Supernaturalism; the other to the paradoxes of a complete Naturalism. The struggle of the immediate future lies between these two. For ourselves, we have no doubt which will ultimately prevail; and if we are wrong, why then we prefer to have been wrong with the whole men, than right with the good ones.

§ 3

The advance towards a complete Naturalism will mean the end of Supernaturalism; but nothing less than this will serve to overthrow Supernaturalism. It is the recognition of this 'nothing less' which is important and salutary. To be conscious of the radical adjustments which are involved in a complete Naturalism is to be conscious of the crudeness and poverty of Rationalism in all its innumerable forms.

Supernaturalism is, at the least, a conscious acknowledgment of the richness and mystery of life. A conception which denies this will never maintain itself as a description of reality.

The supersession of Rationalism by Naturalism necessitates something that might be called 'a change in consciousness.' Those who believe that a change of this kind is impossible are naturally absolved from paying any attention to a description in which the possibility of such a change is implicit. But we may point out that those who accept Christianity and those who accept the evolutionary description are alike committed to a belief in the possibility of a change in the human consciousness. If they do not take their own beliefs seriously, that is hardly our concern.

A change in human consciousness sounds highly dramatic; and in some of the forms in which it has manifested itself it is highly dramatic. But the dramatic quality is accidental, and misleading. It belongs to the past, when the category of the Supernatural was a natural category of thought. A felt radical change in the nature of the human consciousness was then inevitably ascribed to a supernatural intervention. But when the religious drama is transposed to the naturalistic level, God and the Devil no longer fight for the possession of the human soul, though the fight they dramatized remains real indeed. There is a conflict between organic responses in the individual, and the indivi-

dual is conscious of the nature of the conflict and of himself as the destined battle-ground; he is the nucleus of potential new emergence.

There need be nothing dramatic about this advance in self-consciousness, except in so far as in the life of the individual man a radical simplification is bound to come to him with something of the dramatic quality of release. Even the late Rémy de Gourmont said somewhere that the opening words of the third book of Spinoza's *Ethics* came to him once with what seemed to him like a religious illumination. Those words of Spinoza are apposite to our contentions here.

> 'Most of those who have written on the emotions, and the manner of human life, seem to have dealt not with natural things which follow the general laws of nature, but with things which are outside the sphere of nature; they seem to have conceived man in nature as a kingdom within a kingdom. For they believe that man disturbs rather than follows the course of nature, and that he has absolute power in his actions, and is not determined in them by anything else than himself.'

The truth was, of course, that what Rémy de Gourmont felt when he first read these liberating words was the full equivalent of a religious illumination. That integration of man into the universe

which was the essence of Spinoza's thinking is the specifically religious achievement. On the surface there is a great difference between Spinoza's saying that the man who truly loves God cannot demand that God shall love him in return, and the teaching of Jesus concerning God. But the difference exists only for those who cannot see beyond the superficies. The same realization utters itself in both. The 'Resist not evil' of Jesus, and the saying of Spinoza are veritably the same.

For Spinoza the universe into which the integrated man was integrated was God. That Spinoza should have called this universe God was very shocking to his contemporaries. His God was evidently no God. But Spinoza was a Jew, who had the sense of the 'divine' as deep in his being as most men. He did not degrade God; he exalted him by making him real. He was the first of the great philosophers after Aristotle who refused to hypostatize. So it was true enough that the God of Spinoza was no God; and it was equally true that his was one of the most deeply religious minds of his century.

There, once more, we encounter the paradox of Naturalism. It amounts to this. The change in consciousness which it requires is the equivalent of a religious illumination; more, it *is* a religious illumination. It is implicit in all those statements of religious realization which have maintained themselves. But the change in consciousness is also the realization

that those statements are metaphorical, and that every age must find a new method of formulation. It is the realization that mankind has reached a stage in which absolutes and eternals are not required; men can do without them. When men can do without such luxuries, then it becomes their duty to do without them, and they will find themselves not poorer, but richer, for the willing sacrifice.

We end, inevitably, on the note of paradox. A religious realization that the day of religion is over will strike some pious souls as a barren play of words. But we doubt whether such pious souls will have read so far. The others will hardly need our assurance that the paradox is earnestly meant. In the name of the satisfying real, we aim at overthrowing the unsatisfying ideal.

That does not mean, of course, that the real, as generally conceived is satisfying. It is, we admit with all the fervour that can possibly be required, utterly unsatisfactory. Further, we claim to understand and to sympathize with all those who, thus conceiving the real, have been impelled to posit the eternal ideal in order, so to speak, to take the taste of the real away. If the real really is horrible, then assuredly luckless humanity is perfectly justified in erecting the ideal to nullify it. If the real is what they think it is, then up with the ideal! or Suicide becomes a duty. Though it is still true that the ideal thus posited is eternally separate from the real, and can only be brought into contact with the

real by the instrumentality of the supernatural and the exercise of faith, nevertheless, the miracle must be accepted.

But, we say, before you finally decide that the real is unbearable without the ideal, take another and a longer and a simpler look at the real. You will find in it surprising things which perhaps you have never noticed before. It has contained, to the simplest inspection, many very wonderful achievements of man: heroisms, beauties, imaginations and inventions. You will observe that this real, which you think to find unbearable, and which (it may be) has pressed hard upon yourself, has a strange and simple quality. It enables these wonderful emergences to endure. The emergence and endurance of these glorious things is as much a character of the real as any of the qualities which you may find unbearable.

You may be disquieted because the ideals that you have loved are still far from accomplishment. Yet, if you pause to consider, is it not an astonishing thing that you should love those ideals? Outside you they are not real, but in you, in so far as you embody them (and even to think about them is to embody them), they are as real as your own right hand. And so with the men before you. You need not worry yourself about the existence of the ideal. Simple inspection will show you that it has existed and does exist, only not as the Ideal. When the ideal exists it is simply the real; it is embodied in some thing or

some person. What you imagine to be a response to the ideal, is simply a response to the real, and you who respond are simply part of the real.

In you reality has an opportunity to respond to its own achieved perfections, and in a new way. You may prefer a more glorious and more inspiring description of the facts; but you have to reckon with the possibility that, by indulging this preference, you are shutting the only way by which certain later perfections can gain access to yourself. It is for you to decide whether you will allow them to enter and work their will. If you decide to admit them, there will be disturbance and travail of soul. It is not easy to reconcile the responses of which the human organism is capable. Probably, it never has been easy. But disturbance and travail are posited, in a simple inspection of reality, as the constant conditions of new birth. They do well who resolve to accept them.

EPILOGUE

§ 1

Descriptions of most things are implicit in the description of reality attempted in this book: among them a description of the book itself. Since the book is nothing if not self-conscious, it had better frankly assert its claim. It claims to be a significant organic variation in the metabiological mode.

The claim to significance may be preposterous; but it cannot be refuted yet. That it is an organic variation in the metabiological mode no one who cares to use its language can possibly deny. He may not like the language. We are none too fond of it ourselves. If we could have found a better, we should have used it. But accuracy was more important than elegance, and there were unusually urgent reasons why we should strive our utmost to avoid misunderstanding.

Therefore we will continue to use the language we have invented, and continue our description of the book. It has one peculiarity. It is perhaps the first book that has appeared which is precisely conscious of itself as organic variation in the metabiological mode. In that small and accidental uniqueness may be the justification of its claim to be a significant variation as well.

Not that we confuse uniqueness with significance. All variations are unique: comparatively few signi-

ficant. The claim of this one to significance will be adjudicated to-day, to-morrow, ten years, fifty years, a hundred years hence; always differently, always more certainly. For even the oblivion of 1939 will be less decided than the oblivion of 1979, likewise the remembrance, if remembrance be its destiny.

For better or worse, it presents itself as a small thing, but a new one; a 'sport' which will either be incorporated by response into new metabiological variations, or passed indifferently by. Those who are interested in it will at least have the comfort of being able to describe their interest in terms less vague, and also less pretentious, than those which are generally used to describe such attitudes. It can at least claim to have simplified criticism of itself.

§ 2

Fundamentally, I believe that it is a very simple book, though I confess that there are pages in it which certainly do not wear the appearance of simplicity.

It is the record of the way by which one man succeeded in disintoxicating himself from a mystical experience. But if that is its only value, then I am sorry that it should have been given to the world. Its subjective importance, which is great enough. gives it no claim at all upon the world's attention.

But there is, I believe, another side to it. It does,

or attempts to do, other things. That it is, in a sense, mainly autobiography is, after all, an exemplification of its own theory, that even the most abstract speculations of the mind are as integral a part of their author's organism as the fingers of his hand. I am not foolish enough to imagine that its theory is thus corroborated; but I find it curious that at a moment when I had not the faintest notion of what the sequel would contain, I should have been compelled by an obscure instinct to begin with deliberate autobiography.

Perhaps these details are quite trivial. I am incompetent to decide. But since it appears to me interesting, I will emphasize the fact that when I had finished the autobiographical section; when I had, so to speak, brought myself up to date; I was in a condition of complete ignorance as to what would emerge.

Indeed, the whole history of the book is curious. It had its immediate origin in a meditation on the sentence of Goethe which is twice quoted in the text: '*Dass man gerade nur denkt, wenn, das worüber man denkt, man gar nicht ausdenken kann.*' It was a sentence which seemed to fit me well on its negative side, if not its positive; and in particular it seemed to fit well the nature of my thinking on a subject which had been in my thoughts for a long while – Christ and Christianity. On that subject I could not reach one final and satisfying conclusion. Goethe's sentence helped to give me the courage of my

own inconclusiveness. I felt that I must try once more.

So I began an essay on Christ and Christianity with Goethe's sentence at its head. The essay insisted on unwinding itself into a book at a surprising and indeed alarming speed. But it lost itself in the sands of the old inconclusiveness; and I was dimly aware of the cause. I had not made up my mind, and I could not make up my mind, about the real nature of the mystical experience. Then, as now, I was certain that the life of Jesus grew out of such an experience. My intellect insisted that the unity given in such an experience must be illusion; something different and deeper insisted that if such beauty and coherence as was manifest in his life was based on illusion, there was no hope for men. I simply *could not* admit that there was any essential 'life-mistake' in Jesus. The beauty and coherence of his life stared me in the face. If illusion was necessary to create that beauty, then illusion was necessary to man. My whole being revolted against that conclusion; my mind insisted that it was inescapable.

This profound inward division, of which I was scarcely conscious, debilitated my book. I felt, at one and the same moment, that it was the best I could do, and that it was no good. My readers will recognize the pattern of this condition; it is that of the state preliminary to the mystical experience, as I have analysed and described it here. Of course, I did not recognize it then; I recognize it now for the

first time. I was simply aware that I had reached an impasse in writing a book. After all, I had not expected anything better. I had begun with the warning sentence of Goethe fairly before my eyes: 'Then only are we really thinking when the subject on which we are thinking *cannot* be thought out.' Nevertheless, I was deeply disappointed. I had set out to discover, if I could, what I really did believe; to have to admit to myself that I did not know was distressing.

I had been working with a kind of feverish excitement. I was oddly anxious to be free of the book. There was a practical reason for this. A minor operation on myself was overdue. It would mean a break of continuity in the writing of the book; and I was determined to finish the book first. That was sensible enough. But beneath this was a less conscious and less reputable determination – a determination that my conscious determination should prevail. I read my manuscript over and over again. I tinkered with it. I added cautious chapters to placate the criticism I foresaw. But never at any moment could I grasp it as a whole. It was not a whole; and none of my obstinate labours could make it one.

Suddenly I gave up the struggle. I decided to go into the nursing home, to finish with the operation, and then, with the clarity that would, I trusted, come of the compulsory rest, to read the manuscript once more, and see what was to be done.

I went into the nursing home; I went under a full anæsthetic for the first time in my life, and experienced something which was for me quite indistinguishable from the mystical experience. Strangely enough, though the struggle back to consciousness was prolonged and peculiar, I was only mildly interested in my experience. It seems that I should have been immensely excited by it; but at the moment I felt simply like one who had revisited a country where he had been before. A familiar thing had happened again.

I returned home, and took up the book again. I was as discontented with it as ever. But one small thing was now clear to me. It was interlarded with autobiography. Either I must cut away the autobiography altogether; or I must gather the fragments together, face what I was doing honestly, and write it as a whole. So I sat down and wrote the first section as it now stands. Quite unexpectedly, when I had reached the end of it, I felt that I could go straight ahead. With a strange feeling of relief I put the old manuscript in the waste-paper basket, and began.

Then I realized that my insoluble problem had been solved. The mystical experience and the anæsthetic experience were indeed the same. That identification which had seemed to me, as to others, so degrading, was the key to the real unity of man and the universe. It was all perfectly simple. The last irrational surd had been eliminated.

Whether it will be so perfectly simple to others, I cannot say. On the face of things it seems incredible that the solution for which I had to struggle so long should be obvious to other minds. I am not a genius; but neither am I a fool. If the truth stared me in the face for so long, and I could not see it, perhaps it must be a difficult truth. And yet, there it is, obvious, before me; and so far as I am able to judge, I am absolutely sane. I have indeed a feeling of sanity such as I have never experienced in my life before.

Yet I have reached a pitch of self-consciousness in writing this book such that I am astonished that it does not frighten me. The self-consciousness is of the oddest kind. Thus, before writing this final section, I was aware that something more was needed. What it was I did not know; but I dimly felt it needed some statement of its own self-consciousness. That was simple enough, and it has been made: it presents itself consciously as emergent organic variation. But more, I felt, was required; and I went on to describe the actual writing of the book, as I have done.

While I was doing this I realized, for the first time, that the pattern of the mystical experience, as I had described it, had exactly repeated itself, in the new category which the book seeks to establish. There had been the same profound inward division, the same organic resolution, the same delighted seeing of the simple truth; and the object concerning

which the division and the resolution had been reached was none other than the nature of the mystical experience itself. In other words, this book is simply the record of a 'mystical' experience which has taken place wholly within consciousness. The description is not quite accurate, for 'consciousness' here means something different from what it is generally supposed to mean. The process of organic resolution has been *almost* wholly aware of itself; but not wholly. The book was, implicitly, aware of itself as organic variation in actual process of emergence, it was aware of the pattern to which such a process of emergence must conform; it was not and could not be aware of the actual manner in which that pattern was being embodied. If it had been, the book could not have been written. It is now completely aware of itself, but that is because it has now been completely written. The variation must have emerged before it can know itself.

Perhaps, in this exceedingly obvious reflection, I pass the limits of the comprehensible. I find this final consolation: if I am mad, I am mad in a new way. That is something. Further, if my madness should prove to be catching enough, it will ultimately be sane.

P.S.—To my friends, Dr. James Young and Sir Richard Rees, I am deeply indebted for encouragement and criticism.

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